

Awakening: La France Mandarine is both a tribute to the past and an exhibition to describe the future.

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In ancient times Lijiang was a staging post on the route between Southeast Asia and Tibet.

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'Little Ding' is spearheading the Chinese team in the 2005 World Snooker China Open.

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Tracing

the Truth

By Zhou Ying

“Japan’s wartime crimes cannot be forgotten by the Chinese and Japanese people,” declared Matsuoka Tamaki, a 58-year-old primary school teacher from Japan in Nanjing Tuesday.

Carrying a camera, a sound recorder and a digital video camera, Matsuoka, together with two other Japanese volunteers, arrived in Nanjing last Friday to continue her work of collecting evidence about the War of Resistance against Japan. She described her work as a special gift for the 60th anniversary of Japan’s surrender.

For Matsuoka, this visit to China, the 40th at her own expense, was just another step in her journey to uncover the truth of what happened during that war. “I will do anything I can to find the facts, and I will never give up the task,” she told *Beijing Today* Tuesday.

20 years of research

As a member and organizer of the Mingxin committee, a non-government organization in Japan, Matsuoka has been researching the Sino-Japanese war for nearly 20 years. “I joined the committee in 1988, two years after it was established, and then I came to Nanjing in order to find out what really happened in 1937,” she said.

As a teacher in a Japanese primary school, Matsuoka says she had a strong feeling that there was much information about the war between Japan and China missing from the children’s textbooks, and she was not able to explain the events clearly to her students.

“The more mysterious a thing is, the more curious I will be, therefore I joined the committee and followed them to come to China, hoping that I could manage to learn more detailed facts about the history of the war,” she explained.

Speaking of her first visit to Nanjing, Matsuoka told *Beijing Today* she felt terrible when an old lady expressed to her directly her hatred of Japanese people. “I will never forget the expression on her face. I realized at that time that the intruders knew nothing about the feelings of their victims,” she said.

Since then, she began to conduct research and investigation in China. During the past 10 years, she has visited more than 200 survivors of massacres carried out by Japanese troops in Nanjing, Wuxi, Shanghai and Jiangyin.

When asked whether her task was difficult, she just smiled and replied simply, “it’s ok.” However the interpreter from the Nanjing Massacre Museum, Chang Chang, revealed that most of the survivors Matsuoka interviewed were reluctant to talk to strangers about their tragedy. “I have known Matsuoka for about ten years, and I will be her interpreter whenever she is here,” Chang said. She explained that the museum at first helped Matsuoka to find some local survivors, and every time she comes to China,

A Japanese schoolteacher seeks the facts about the Nanjing massacre



Matsuoka Tamaki with 90-year-old Ji Yaofa, who found sanctuary from Japanese troops at Nanjing’s Xixia Temple.

Photo by Zhou Ying

she will visit them and give them money. They are friends now,” she added.

Time is running out

Matsuoka showed *Beijing Today* a copy of her schedule for this trip. Every day of her five days in Nanjing is fully accounted for. When asked why she was

in such a hurry, she responded gravely that time was limited.

Most of the survivors are now over 70 years old “I have to try my best to see more, because the fewer the number of survivors, the harder the task will be,” she said.

On her second day in Nanjing

she visited Pukou Convalescent Home, where she interviewed five old men who lived through the Nanjing Massacre. “I spoke to one of them five years ago, however this time when I arrived, I found that he had to stay in bed all day, and he hardly recognized me. I really felt quite

upset,” Matsuoka said.

Not content to confine her work to outside Japan, Matsuoka has also visited some Japanese soldiers who fought in the war. A book compiled by Matsuoka, titled *The Battle of Nanjing – a Search of Sealed Memories*, was published two years ago in Japan, in which she interviews some 250 veterans across Japan, including former soldiers who confessed to committing atrocities in Nanjing, including murder, rape and robbery.

Matsuoka said that she and other Japanese volunteers involved in the collection of the testimonies hope to “tell the truth to our people.” Japanese conservatives deny that the Nanjing

massacre ever occurred, calling it a fabrication.

Admirable spirit

Matsuoka and her two compatriots visited Xixia temple in the countryside close to Nanjing on Tuesday morning to research a story she had heard. “I have heard that the temple saved more than 20,000 refugees in 1937, and I really wondered how a small temple could save such a large number of people during wartime,” she said. She remained curious until a monk named Chuan Zhen explained the whole story to her.

Thousands of people fled from their homes to avoid the violence of Japanese troops in 1937, and some 20,000 entered the temple, seeking Buddha’s blessing. Many of them stayed in the temple for nearly three months, and the monks went out to find food for them.

One day, three Japanese soldiers came to the gate of the temple, and all the people inside felt nervous. At that time, a small monk called Yue Ji came out and asked if he could talk to the soldiers for a while. During their conversation, Yue Ji found that he was a schoolmate of the Japanese officer when he studied in Japan, and the officer confessed that they really did not want to kill people at all. The danger was averted and the soldiers left, under the direction of the officer.

With the help of Chuan Zhen, Matsuoka met Ji Yaofa, a 90-year-old man who was among the first group of refugees who sought sanctuary in the temple, and told her the story in detail. She spoke to Ji for nearly one hour, and was so professional that whenever Ji mentioned a detail, she would ask him if he had actually seen it happen with his own eyes.

She later told *Beijing Today* that she had checked some books that contained evidence about the story some years ago in China, however, all the evidence was quite vague, and there were no exact times and places. “In our country, people are more likely to believe a claim if it is supported by detailed evidence, so I insist to ask witnesses for details. That will make it easier to convince the right-wing forces,” Matsuoka explained.

Referring to the issue of some Japanese text books blaming the war on China, Matsuoka stated that a fact is a fact, and nobody can change history. “People who wrote such books do not really know the facts, they just want to cover the truth, and my job is to reveal the history to my students,” she said.

Chang Chang, Matsuoka’s interpreter told *Beijing Today* that the Nanjing Massacre Museum will hold an exhibition at the National Museum of China in July this year to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Japan’s surrender, and all the evidence and tapes that Matsuoka has collected over the past 20 years will be on display at that time.

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The Cost of War

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression lasted for 97 months, from 1937 to 1945. The Chinese army fought in 111,500 engagements of various sizes. The Japanese side recorded around 1.1 million military casualties, wounded and missing. The Chinese suffered

much worse, with approximately 3.22 million soldiers killed, 9.13 million civilians dead in crossfire, and another 8.4 million non-military casualties. It is estimated that as many as 300,000 people died in the Nanjing Massacre. (Provided by www.fact-index.com)

By Xinhua/Chu Meng

Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan met with the visiting Kuomintang (KMT) delegation led by KMT vice-president Chiang Pin-kung at Zhongnanhai yesterday afternoon. They discussed cross-straits economic exchanges and cooperation.

Tang said that cross-straits cooperation on cultural and economic exchanges had made significant achievements through more than ten years' hard work from the two sides. Such achievements enhanced mutual understanding and benefits between people from the mainland and Taiwan.

The visiting delegation also visited Dr. Sun Yat-sen's imposing memorial hall at the Fragrant Hills yesterday morning.

Chiang Pin-Kun and his delegation arrived in Guangzhou Monday afternoon, marking the KMT's first formal visit to the mainland since the group fled to Taiwan in 1949.

The current visit of Chiang Pin-kung is the first sign of a dialogue between the KMT and the Communist Party of China (CPC), said Chen Yunlin, director of the CPC Central Committee's Taiwan Affairs Office, Wednesday.

Chiang's visit, entrusted by KMT President Lien Chan, "has inaugurated the first sign of a dialogue between your

Chiang's Visit 'First Sign' of CPC-KMT Dialogue



Chiang Pin-kung pays tribute to Sun Yat-sen at the memorial at the Fragrant Hills.

Xinhua Photo

Party and our Party," said Chen, who welcomed the KMT delegation in his office.

Chiang is hoping his visit to the mainland will ease recently strained cross-straits tensions as well as promote economic ties.

Chiang said he was particularly hoping to help farmers in Taiwan sell more agricultural produce to the vast mainland market.

Currently, Taiwan's annual agricultural sales to the mainland are around US \$300 million while its agricultural imports from other provinces, municipalities and regions come to US \$500 million.

Chiang said he hoped to negotiate with relevant mainland departments about opening direct cargo transport links across the Taiwan Straits, benefiting Taiwan investors who have set up manufacturing facilities on the mainland.

Chiang visited the Guangzhou Huanghuagang Martyr Cemetery Tuesday morning.

When Dr Sun Yat-sen, founder of the KMT, led the Huanghuagang Uprising in Guangzhou to overthrow the rule of the corrupt Qing Dynasty government in April of 1911, 86 of his allies were slain.

On Wednesday, Chiang bowed to pay tribute to a statue of Dr Sun Yat-sen at Sun's mausoleum in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

Chiang and his delegation will end their trip on Friday.

New Rules to Protect Cultural Treasures

By Chu Meng

The Beijing Regulation for Historical and Cultural City Protection, which takes effect from May 1, stipulates that as well as protecting over 3,500 listed heritage sites, the city will also protect unlisted sites deemed to be of historical or cultural value. The long-awaited law was passed by the 12th National People's Congress Standing Committee last Friday.

Under the law, such things as the colors of old buildings, ancient trees and even the names of houses and lanes will have legal protection.

"The core of the regulation is that Beijing will pay more attention to protecting the old city's landscape in its entirety, rather than just focusing on scattered heritage sites," said Mei Ninghua, director of the Beijing

Administrative Bureau of Cultural Heritage.

Heritage guardians have long appealed for the traditional fabric of the old city to be preserved, including the old lanes and courtyards. They feared a policy of only protecting isolated heritage sites could result in them eventually being sandwiched between high-rise office blocks.

"Now the new regulations

give legal buttress to the protection of *siheyuan* courtyard houses, as well as other unmovable ancient treasures, that have yet to be listed but are at risk of being demolished during urban renovation," Mei added.

The regulations also stipulate that any civilians or workers who find buildings deserving protection can report to the city's heritage administrative authorities

and put forward their own suggestions on how to protect them.

But Luo Zhewen, a renowned Beijing heritage expert warned that the way in which the regulations are implemented is of great importance. "Without efficient and iron-handed measures, the traditional appearance and flavor of Beijing might vanish completely and forever," said Luo.

Petroleum Reform Draft Plan Submitted for Audit

By Chu Meng

A draft reform plan for China's petroleum industry was released by the Energy Bureau under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Tuesday. An audit will be held Saturday to assess the feasibility of the plan for the domestic petroleum market.

The audit, overseen by director-

general of the Energy Bureau Xu Dingming and participated in by a wide range of experts, will focus on three topics: marketing, construction of distribution mechanism and marketing. The plan was drawn up based on notes issued by the State Council on February 24, which opened the door for private capital to invest in coal exploration,

mining and commercial operation for mineral energy resource.

China's total demand for petroleum is forecast to increase about 10 percent this year, to 2.5 billion barrels. The country will increase exploration and production to reduce reliance on oil imports, stated Tan Zhuzhou, chairman of the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association.

Tan said China would also continue to participate in overseas oil exploration. China has signed contracts to cooperate in oil exploration with 19 countries and is involved in major projects in Indonesia and Africa.

Tough Issues for New SAFE Director

By Annie Wei

The State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) Monday named Hu Xiaolian as its new director.

Hu, 46, has been assistant to Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the People's Bank of China, since August last year. She has worked at SAFE since the early 1990s and served as vice-director from 2001 to 2004. Since finishing postgraduate studies in 1985, Hu has been involved in policy reform of foreign exchange and financial systems.

Hu's predecessor, Guo Shuqing, was appointed Communist Party secretary of the China Construction Bank on March 17.

Zhong Wei, an economist from Beijing Normal University was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* Monday as saying that Hu was a persistent supporter of improving the flexibility of China's foreign exchange system and opening up the exchanging rate of the renminbi. In a speech during the 10th Anniversary of the CFETS and Forum on China's Money Market in New York 2002, she said China's foreign exchange market needed further development and perfection.

Hu's appointment has generated considerable interest, with recent issues such as the RMB exchange rate and the inflow of "hot money" being widely reported in the media.

He Fan, from Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was quoted in the *Beijing News* Wednesday as saying that the first and foremost challenge for SAFE was to manage capital flow, because China has a high foreign exchange reserve and a high frequency of short-term capital inflow.

Cao Honghui, from the academy's Institute of Banking and Finance said in the same article that there was a large quantity of capital flowing in and out of the country through underground banks. Dealing with this hot money is a serious issue confronting SAFE.

E-signature Law Takes Effect

By Wang Xiaoyuan

A new law governing electronic signature (e-signature) takes effect today. Under the law, most normal commercial contracts may be signed electronically, and such e-signatures will carry the same legal weight as traditional signatures.

The law defines an e-signature, or digital signature, as data in electronic form (such as electronic symbol, code or sound) attached to or logically associated with an electronic message that identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic message; and indicates such person's approval of the information contained in the message.

Professor Mei Shaozu, an expert on e-commerce and professor at Beijing University of Technology and Science, commented that the passing of the law is significant, as it is the first law resulting from the development of informatics.

He said the legal recognition of the e-signature will attract more international investment to China's e-commerce market, and help promote the economy, adding that the law can be applicable beyond the scope of commercial activities.

Zhang Xiangdong, CEO of China Wan Wang, commented that the advantages recognition of e-signature will bring to enterprises in China is promising, especially in terms of e-commerce. For companies dealing mainly with online processes, the e-signature will greatly promote efficiency. It will save executives from the need to make trips expressly for the purpose of signing a contract; and allow payments to be made directly online. Should any conflict arise between company and customer, an e-contract can serve as legal evidence.

Draft Law Approved on SOE Bankruptcy

By Lin Chenxi

The State Council has approved the draft law on the four year term programming of closing and declaring bankruptcy of state owned enterprises (SOEs). Vice-director of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, Ren Shaoming, made the announcement at the Chinese Enterprises Developing Forum last Saturday.

An analyst commented that the new regulation puts SOEs on the same legal footing as foreign funded or privately owned enterprises, meaning SOEs would no longer have a franchise in declaring bankruptcy.

The main distinctions between declaring bankruptcy through a law-based procedure as opposed to a policy-based procedure, is that after declaring bankruptcy, a company's assets would mainly be used to pay outstanding wages to employees, rather than to repay creditors.

The draft law is listed on 2005's legislating agenda and will be put before the National People's Congress for further deliberation when it convenes later this year.

Foreign Banks Pay More Tax in First Quarter

By Annie Wei

The Beijing Taxation Bureau announced that in the first quarter, 23 foreign banks have paid 36 million yuan in tax, an increase of 15.5 million yuan, or 75 percent on the same period last year, according to an article in Sunday's *Beijing Youth Daily*.

The article said foreign banks like HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank and Citibank China have shifted their business to Beijing since November 2004, when foreign banks were given the green light to conduct RMB business here.

As a consequence, a large quantity of foreign capital has flown into Beijing, leading to an increase in the number of financial institutions, employees and business deals.

In the first quarter, employees of foreign banks paid a total of 24 million yuan in personal income tax, up 10 million, or 74 percent, on the previous year.

Crack Down on Money Laundering

By Lin Chenxi

The Ministry of Public Security and People's Bank of China will cooperate to further crack down on the crime of money laundering. Meanwhile the two will formulate a regulation to clarify the division of their work and responsibility, as well as the mechanism, content and procedure of their cooperation.

According to the regulation, the cooperation will adhere to the principle "to control, to integrate the work of fighting crime, to cooperate and to handle cases legally."

Experts say such a regulation would be helpful in ensuring that cases are handled in accordance with legal criteria, and to enhance the ability to expose criminal cases.

By Wang Chun

Vice-president of the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CSRC) Tang Shuangning has indicated that the key to success in the reform of state-owned commercial banks into joint-stock commercial banks lies in quality assessment.

Consulting with advanced experiences shared by many renowned international banks, two pilot sites selected for the reform - the Bank of China and China Construction Bank, had concluded on generally recognized criteria for quality assessment. The criteria include factors like performance and liability, asset monitoring and risk control. The CSRC believes that the

Pilot Banks Selected for International Standard

three categories and seven items contained in the criteria index will help the two banks to attain an above average position among the top 100 in the world.

The first step toward reaching the goal, according to Tang, is to carry on a rigorous evaluation on the performance and liability factors in the two pilot banks. The second step is implementation of strict assessment of asset quality, which is crucial to

keep bad asset rates at no more than 3 to 5 percent.

Lastly, the two banks should be evaluated prudently on the risk-control management factor. Starting from 2004, gearing ratio at the two banks should be maintained above 8 percent.

Starting from 2005, the rate of residual balance to the residual capital from the credit side should not exceed 10 percent.

Exchange Rate Policies Subject to Domestic Conditions

present balance of international payments, but emphasized that it is not excessively large.

China needs to carry on its reform of the RMB exchange rate and constantly improve the formulation mechanism to make it more adaptable to the new external situation and maintain a stable financial system, reiterated Zhou.

The reform will be commenced at an appropriate time and implemented in stages, he said, adding that as a responsible country, China would also allow for the impact the

reform would create on the neighboring and global economy.

Soaring international oil and mineral prices and increasing real estate prices have made revaluation of the renminbi a question of when and how much, according to Zhao Xijun, vice-director of the institute of finance and securities, Renmin University.

Currently, there is disagreement over the need for revaluation; some experts maintain that revaluation will have a negative impact on the economy's long-term growth, while others say it will bring benefits.

By Nie Zhiyang

Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the People's Bank of China, said that China's policies on the exchange rate of the renminbi (RMB) primarily take into consideration domestic factors, rather than trade conditions in other countries, Xinhua reported Tuesday.

Zhou pointed out that future efforts would focus more on perfecting the mechanism for the formulation of RMB exchange rates, rather than merely revaluing the currency.

In the interview published in *People's Daily*, Zhou said elements like the domestic economy, international trade balance and prices are the major concerns of China's exchange rate policies.

He acknowledged that there is a surplus in the current account in its

Telecom Giants Sign Strategic Partnership

By Maggie Zhao

China's two largest telecommunications operators, China Telecom and China Mobile, signed a strategic cooperation framework agreement last Wednesday, *People's Post and Telecommunications* reported.

The agreement calls for the strengthening of the two huge companies' cooperative and competitive relations in order to support the telecom industry's development and provide diversified and high quality services to clients in China and abroad.

China Telecom and China Mobile agreed that

while complying with national laws and regulations, they would further regulate market behavior and compete impartially, provide better services to clients, optimize their use of resources while reducing duplicate construction and solve problems based on negotiations.

"China Telecom and China Mobile both have comparative advantages in this industry. Through the sharing of resources, they can learn from each other, enhance their quality of services and become more competitive," Wang Xiaochu, managing director of China Telecom said.

Wang Jianzhou, managing director of China Mobile, agreed the deal was a win-win solution for helping improve stability in the domestic telecom market.

Some industry analysts have said the Ministry of Information Industry and the Chinese State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission pushed the companies into the deal for fear that the long-awaited granting of 3G licenses to domestic telecom operators would give rise to massive amounts of redundant construction and wasted resources.

ING Buys Stake in Bank of Beijing

By Xie Ling

Dutch financing group ING's wholly owned subsidiary ING Bank announced on March 25 it had signed a deal to purchase an up to 19.9 percent stake in local commercial bank Bank of Beijing for approximately 1.78 billion yuan.

The agreement was signed in Beijing by ING Chairman Michel Tilmant and Bank of Beijing Chairman Yan Bingzhu. The two parties also agreed that ING would take two seats on Bank of Beijing's 15-person board of directors.

"We are very glad to have been able to sign this agreement with one of China's most highly regarded banks. We believe there is large growth potential for retail banking in China, and particularly in Beijing. We are excited to have this chance to work closely with Bank of Beijing to achieve that potential," Tilmant said.

Yan remarked, "The introduction of foreign shareholders is aimed at promoting Bank of Beijing's internationalization strategy and brand building and enhance our core competitiveness and sustainable development."

Minsheng Bank OK'd to IPO in Hong Kong

By Wang Shuang

China Minsheng Banking Corp announced last Friday that the China Securities Regulatory Commission had given it authorization to list in Hong Kong.

Minsheng's initial public offering (IPO), the timing of which has not been announced, would make it the first privately-owned Chinese mainland bank to list in Hong Kong. The bank's IPO plans are now awaiting approval from the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

The bank first announced its intent to hold an IPO in Hong Kong in December 2003, but faced a rocky road in getting approval from the China Securities Regulatory Commission, which finally gave Minsheng the green light only recently.

Minsheng has lined up Citibank, Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank to underwrite its IPO. Analysts predict the bank's stock price in Hong Kong will be lower than in the mainland.

Three Chinese state-owned banks, China Construction Bank, Bank of China and Bank of Communications, are also slated to list in Hong Kong this year.

PwC Reports on CAO's Losses

By Annie Wei

China Aviation Oil (Singapore) Corp (CAO) released PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)'s statement of its phase one findings regarding the Chinese company's massive debts on its Web site on Tuesday.

PwC was appointed by CAO at the direction of the Singapore stock exchange to investigate affairs related to the oil trading scandal at CAO that came to light last November.

The report said CAO's financial troubles towards the end of 2004 were primarily the result of losses that arose from its oil derivatives trading business.

CAO failed to correctly predict trends in oil prices, leading to the losses, did not value its options portfolio in accordance with industry standards and provided inaccurate reports in its financial statements from 2002 to 2004, the report said.

CAO spokesman Gerald Woon declined to comment on that report when contacted by *Beijing Today*. PwC's investigation has not been completed.

China's Chery Scores Customers in Egypt



An Egyptian customer asks for information at a Chery automobile sales and service center in Cairo on Tuesday. Since SAIC Chery Automobile Co. started cooperation with Egyptian company CIG last year, Chery has managed to sell over 500 cars in the Egyptian market in five months.

Xinhua Photo

Former Roche President Jailed for Eight Years

By Xie Ling

Wang Wenxiong, former president of Roche-diagnostics China, was sentenced to eight years in prison and a fine of 50,000 yuan by a Shanghai court on March 22. The former head of Fortune 500 company Roche's local branch was standing trial on bribery charges, and 2.23 million yuan in illegal money Wang supposedly received was confiscated.

Wang, born in Taiwan, has

been a major player in the domestic medical field, having served as branch manager for America's Johnson & Johnson Co. and president and director of Roche-diagnostics (Shanghai) Co. since 1999.

"It was the centralization of great power in Wang's hands that led him to commit the crimes," prosecutor Yan Guobin told the court.

Roche-diagnostic's products

were strong sellers in the domestic market, creating room for Wang to accept bribes from would-be distributors, prosecutors said.

The imbalance of supply and demand in the medical appliance market was also possibly to blame, the court was told. In 2003, the sales volume of medical equipment in China was 50 billion yuan and it has been steadily rising since.

No Bids In Yet for Big Land Blocks

By Han Manman

Bidding for the last two sections of land in Beijing's biggest property auction began on March 30 with a starting price of 800 million yuan.

The two sections of land in the Fengtai Science Park cover a total of nearly 35,000 square meters and can be used to build hotels, exhibition centers, shopping malls and entertainment facilities.

Duan Haibo, chairman of Fengtai Science Park Construction and Development Co. said the two properties would become the core of a new business center in southern Beijing. Duan said China Construction Bank had signed a cooperation contract with the developer to provide

loans to the winning bidder for construction and development.

Although more than 20 developers have expressed interest in the plots before the public tender started, no bids were registered on Wednesday, when the auction officially began. Chen Yahui, an employee of Fengtai Science Park Construction and Development Co. told *Beijing Today* that most developers were afraid to back themselves into corners by registering bids too early in the three-month auction.

Any developer who registers a bid that is not trumped by another bid within 10 days will win the rights to use the large sections of land.

Standard Gap Means Lipton Tea Safe in China

By Han Manman

Lipton Tea products in China are up to the standards for soft drinks of the Department of Agriculture's Tea Quality Inspection Center and do not have excess fluoride content, Unilever, the producer of the tea-based beverages, announced on Tuesday.

An recent investigation in the US showed that some instant tea products, including Lipton beverages, contained harmful levels of fluoride that could result in bone pain.

In order to assure the public of the safety of Lipton tea, Unilever China Co. twice sent its Lipton products to related government departments for testing, Wu Liang, manager of Unilever China's communication

department, said.

While the tea passed the checks, there still are questions about its safety. China's fluoride standards were less restrictive than those of other countries, including the US, *Beijing News* reported on Thursday.

Moderate intake of tea was good, not harmful, to health, a Chinese food security specialist surnamed Chen said. Fluoride should not be a problem as long as producers followed standards in making tea products, he said.

The Agriculture Bureau's tea requirements of 2003 stipulate that tea's fluoride content should be no more than 200 milligrams per kilogram of tea. The average fluoride content of Chinese tea is 85 to 100 milligrams per kilogram.

TV Maker Announces Transformation

By Han Manman

Sichuan Changhong Electric Co., China's leading television maker, on Monday announced plans to enter the communications technology and information industries to achieve its corporate transformation strategy.

Zhao Yong, chairman of the board of Changhong, which recently posted a second straight year of heavy losses, went public with the strategy at the China Sci-Tech City Electronic and Information Industry Forum for Investment and Co-

operation in Mianyang, Sichuan Province.

Zhao said Changhong would invest 200 million yuan to establish Guohong Communication Digital Group, a new firm that would produce, sell and provide services for communication terminals, network terminals and other personal electronic products.

The television maker has also set up Changhong Information Technique, a 3G business, and said it would open broadband and video business with China Telecom.

GM China Chairman Resigns

By Qiu Jiaoning

General Motors Corp announced Wednesday that Phil Murtaugh, chairman and CEO of GM China Group, had resigned and was leaving the company.

The American auto giant said in a statement that details of Murtaugh's replacement were being finalized and an announcement was pending. Troy Clarke, GM's Shanghai-based Asia-Pacific president would oversee the carmaker's ventures in China until the replacement

was announced, the company said.

Murtaugh had been a part of the GM organization in China since January 1996, serving a leadership role within Shanghai GM, the initial joint venture between GM and Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp. Group, and later as chairman and CEO of GM China Group, which oversees GM's seven joint ventures and two wholly owned enterprises in the Chinese mainland as well as operations in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Standard Chartered Starts RMB Services

By Zhang Di

The Beijing branch of London-based Standard Chartered and Sinochem Corp signed a cooperative framework to offer renminbi services in the domestic market on March 24, *Beijing News* reported.

Since foreign banks were given permission to run renminbi services in Beijing last December, Standard Chartered was the first foreign lender in the Chinese capital to reach such a deal with a corporate

client, the report said.

"This is a fantastic start for Standard Chartered to begin its renminbi services," Yang Lin, manager of Sinochem's assets management department was quoted as saying.

Zuo Zipeng, manager of Standard Chartered's Beijing branch, said staff specializing in renminbi services were in place and more would be recruited in the future.

Yang said that Standard Chartered would become a strategic corporate ally of Sinochem.

CNPC Expanding Links with Japanese Firm

By Wang Shuang

Nippon Oil Corporation (NOC) will expand its cooperation with China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) in the area of petroleum products refining, Nikkei Net Interactive reported on Tuesday.

Plans called for NOC's supplies of refined oil to CNPC to grow 1.5 times, the report said.

The two sides will sign a detailed agreement in the middle of April expected to raise the set refining volume to 30,000 barrels a day from the present 20,000.

Currently, CNPC transports crude oil to six refining factories run by NOC, which then sends the processed oil back to China on CNPC tanker ships.

Lenovo Reveals New Investment Sources

By Lin Chenxi

The price of Lenovo Group shares jumped five percent shortly after markets opened last Thursday, but trading of the company's stock was quickly suspended for a major corporate announcement.

Lenovo announced that its agreement with three American investment companies to buy \$350 million of shares in the domestic computer maker was almost

complete.

The new investment should help Lenovo put together enough money to finish its purchase of IBM's personal computer operations.

The *Wall Street Journal* last Wednesday said that American firms Texas Pacific Group, General Atlantic and Newbridge Capital were lining up to become Lenovo shareholders. Lenovo did not confirm the news at the time.

Jianlibao Former President behind Bars

By Lin Chenxi

Zhang Hai, the former president of Chinese beverage maker Jianlibao, has been detained in Foshan, Guangdong Province, on charges of embezzling funds from the company, Zhang's lawyer, Lu Tao, con-

firmed this week.

Zhang was taken into custody by Foshan police at 8 pm last Thursday in Guangzhou, Lu said.

Jianlibao's latest financial report shows the company's debts rose some 1.6 billion yuan during Zhang's tenure.

Off-Floor Trading Rule to Change in Japan

March 28 (Bloomberg) – The Tokyo Stock Exchange is reviewing its rules and regulations on off-floor trading and disclosure of trading information to raise investor confidence, an executive of the exchange said.

Under the current rules, off-floor trading is available for investors, mainly institutional investors with large-lot orders, to ease the transactions. Trading system regulations introduced in 1997 may be revised to address takeover concerns, Tomio Amano, managing director and executive officer of the exchange, told Bloomberg news.

The trading system “is now being used for purposes that weren’t intended when it was introduced,” Amano said in a March 25 interview. “It is the time now to discuss whether we should just let (such trading practices) go.”

The exchange’s rule review comes after Livedoor Co. bought a 29.6 percent stake in Nippon Broadcasting System Inc. in off-floor trading in

February, raising its stake in the Japanese radio station operator to about 35 percent. Takafumi Horie, the 32-year-old founder and president of the Internet portal, is trying to buy control of Nippon Broadcasting to build an entertainment and information network that combines the Internet and broadcasting. Livedoor holds 50.21 percent of the voting rights in the radio station, the company said in a statement issued through the stock exchange last week.

Amano also said his exchange’s regulations on disclosure of trading information should be revised. Under the current rules, set by Japan’s Financial Services Agency, a shareholder with more than a 5 percent stake in a company must disclose information within five days after a change in shareholdings, including the current stake in the company and the timing of the transaction, in a document filed to the Finance Ministry.

“I doubt whether the present regulations are able to address completely the need for speedy information disclosure,” Amano said in the interview. “It is the time now to discuss how the rules should be revised.”

Analyst’s Take:

As you may guess from the name, off-floor trading or after-hours trading means buying and selling stocks after normal business hours. Mainly depending on the Internet, it allows investors to trade at significantly lower cost than traditional face-to-face transactions. The off-floor trading system is designed to serve investors better and enhance stock transactions; however, it has bred some hostile acquisitions recently.

The move to impose restrictions on off-floor stock trading comes after Livedoor Co.’s surprise acquisition of a large stake in a native radio broadcaster. Japan, like many other countries including the US, has been extremely sensitive to any foreign

ownership of the air waves. In recent years, some foreign companies have acquired a controlling number of shares in Japanese listed firms outside the exchange without publicly launching a takeover bid. Both the Japanese government and listed firms have experienced a certain shock caused by such acquisitions.

In order to prevent native companies, especially public-service ones from being controlled by overseas capital, the Japanese government intends to revise relevant laws to regulate the off-floor trading system.

From deregulation to reregulation, Japan is following the inherent law of modern capitalism. It is necessary for the government to take measures to ensure sound development of the country’s financial market.

– **Liu Junhong**, associate research fellow of the **Institute of Japanese Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations**

(Qiu Jiaoning)

India Steels the Limelight

Kolkata, March 23 (Asia Times) – A lot, maybe too much, has been happening in the Indian steel industry lately. For the past 12 months, the industry has been going through a cyclical boom of a magnitude not seen in decades. The country’s steel industry as a result is getting renewed global attention, which is evident from the fact that India exported a record amount of steel and iron ore in 2004.

Last week, China’s largest steelmaker Baosteel Group said it was considering investments in India to secure iron-ore supplies from the country. “We are considering if we can make an investment in India to get iron ore,” said Yu Zhonghai, director of China’s International Business Development Department, adding that its India plan is an extension of the strategy to control more iron ore in the international market.

India does not have the commensurate steelmaking capacity to use all of its iron-ore reserves. Baosteel’s intention of setting up a base in India then should have come as good news. But the country’s industry is hardly happy. “India’s domestic consumption of iron ore will be very high,” said S.K. Tamotia, an industry expert.

China’s overwhelming appetite for iron ore aimed at increasing its own finished steel production beyond the current capacity of 220 million tons a year, and India’s skyrocketing iron-ore exports, provide enough reasons for the local steel industry to be jittery about the Middle Kingdom’s India interest.

India’s own demand for this resource is going to leapfrog too in the coming years. But an impending shortage of iron ore is not the primary concern. A much bigger problem, at least for now, is the fact that the steel sector repeatedly drew the Indian government’s ire in 2004 for hiking prices. While the government does not want local steelmakers to “profiteer” from the burgeoning demand for steel in the country, the industry says it is helpless in the face of surging prices of inputs such as coke, iron ore and melting scrap that it has to pass on to consumers.

Local Report:

India is well endowed with iron ore resources, which has accounted for about 60 percent of the bilateral trade volume between India and China. The Indian government has recently decided to increase transportation tariffs on iron ore exports in order to curb its exports to China. The move is aimed at exchanging its iron ore for China’s coke.

China is not only the largest coke producing country, but also the largest country for consuming and exporting coke. China’s coke output is estimated to be 195 million tons in 2004 with 185 million tons for domestic consumption and 15 million tons for export. Coke production capacity in China will exceed 260 million tons by 2005, accounting for about 60 per cent of the world total.

There is an acute coke shortage in India and almost all of its needs for coke depend on imports from China. As a result, the government is trying to reach exchange agreements with China through high-level talks between the two countries’ governments. But China has strengthened control on coke exports since the latter half last year because the expansion of the coke industry may cause serious pollution and lead coke producers to scramble for resources, exhausting limited reserves.

The price hike for iron ore this year is regarded as a favorable opportunity for India to realize its plan. However, coke’s exchange volume can hardly go beyond China’s export quota restrictions of 14 million tonnes.

– **21st Century Business Herald**, March 27, 2005

(Qiu Jiaoning)



Residents pass by collapsed buildings in Gunung Sitoli, on Nias island, 30 March 2005 following the 8.7 magnitude tremor that hit shortly before midnight two days ago. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan 29 March voiced distress and pledged UN support following the huge earthquake off Indonesia that rescuers estimate may have claimed more than 1,000 lives.

Xinhua Photo

UK Firms Caught in Illegal Waste Dumping

March 28 (The Guardian) – More than 1,000 tonnes of contaminated household refuse disguised as waste paper on its way to be recycled in China is to be sent back to Britain after being intercepted in the Netherlands.

Dutch environment ministry officials believe that British refuse is being systematically dumped in poor countries via the port of Rotterdam, the largest container port in Europe. In one of the biggest international scams uncovered in years, they say waste companies across Europe are colluding to avoid paying escalating landfill and recycling charges.

The foul-smelling rubbish, which includes waste food, plastic packaging, batteries, drinks cans, old clothes, carrier bags, wood, paper, broken glass and vegetable matter, has been found in 54 large lorry and container loads en route to Rotterdam where they were to be trans-shipped to Asia.

The British government, which says it has recently stopped dozens of other illegal waste-filled containers heading for the Netherlands since Christmas, is investigating several companies and has told local authorities to find

out where their municipal waste is being sent.

According to Dutch officials who found some of the waste by accident in January, British waste companies were using a complicated method of getting rubbish to the Netherlands. “They used two companies and switched between three different UK ports. It was clearly an attempt to deceive the authorities. Even after we told the UK government and the company, they continued to send it.”

The illegal export of English municipal waste has long been suspected but the scale of the trade has only recently come to light. Last year some unsorted household refuse was found being exported from the north-east, and large quantities of Irish rubbish disguised as waste paper also turned up in Rotterdam en route for Indonesia and Singapore. Further investigation showed that companies throughout Ireland were working with middlemen in Belgium and the Netherlands.

New evidence from the Netherlands suggests that 70 percent of the European waste shipped via there to developing countries is illegal.

“Companies get money at both ends. They are paid handsomely by local authorities and businesses to collect the waste. If they can pass it off as paper for recycling they avoid paying to have it separated in Britain and do not pay the £35 a tonne charge to landfill it. They also get paid by Chinese or other brokers. There is very big money to be made,” said one yesterday.

Yesterday an Environment Agency spokeswoman said several British companies were being investigated and that prosecutions would follow if offences were found to have been committed. “The illegal shipment of waste abroad is totally unacceptable and we are taking the matter extremely seriously. This is a Europe-wide problem and, following investigations, a number of potentially illegal exports of contaminated household recyclables from the UK have been detected,” said the environment minister, Elliot Morley.

The illegal British waste on the dockside in Rotterdam is expected to be put on trucks and begin arriving back in Britain this week.

Carlyle Closes Record Capital-Raising

London, March 29 (Reuters) – The Carlyle Group has completed the world’s largest corporate buyout capital-raising at \$10 billion to finance mega-sized deals on both sides of the Atlantic, the private equity firm said on Tuesday.

Carlyle’s latest capital-raising was through two funds. The US-focused Carlyle Partners IV got \$7.85 billion of commitments, and European fund Carlyle Europe Partners II received \$2.2 billion of commitments.

The massive fund-raising comes amid press reports that private equity firms Warburg Pincus and Blackstone also are looking to raise up to \$8 billion each.

With equity returns in public markets essentially flat for most of last year and bond yields at low levels, investors have been flocking to private equity and other alternative investments to boost returns.

“There are lots of pension funds and other institutions with large funds that want exposure to private equity investments,” said Chris Davison, a consultant for Almeida Capital.

AIG Ex-CEO Greenberg to Retire as Chairman

New York, March 29 (AP) – The man who built American International Group Inc. into one of the world’s largest insurers, Maurice “Hank” Greenberg, is retiring as chairman and CEO, billionaire investor Warren Buffett, has been called by regulators to answer questions next month. The request was disclosed in Tuesday’s editions of The Wall Street Journal.

Greenberg – who will end his 37-year career atop AIG later this week – departs as he and the company face an expanding probe by the Securities and Exchange Commission and New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer.

Meanwhile, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. confirmed Tuesday that its chairman and CEO, billionaire investor Warren Buffett, has been called by regulators to answer questions next month. The request was disclosed in Tuesday’s editions of The Wall Street Journal.

The Journal said investigators believed that Buffett was briefed on the nature and structure of 2000-2001 reserve transactions between the company’s General Re Corp. unit and AIG.

HP Picks Hurd to Replace Fiorina

San Jose, March 29 (AP) – Hewlett-Packard Co. named Mark Hurd, a low-key longtime NCR Corp. executive, on Tuesday to replace the ousted Carly Fiorina as president and CEO. HP shares rose more than 10 percent.

Hurd, 48, resigned Tuesday as president and chief executive of NCR and takes charge at HP on April 1. Hurd joined Dayton, Ohio-based NCR, a computer services company perhaps best known for its ATM machines, in 1980 and quietly spearheaded an ambitious turnaround when he became CEO in March 2003.

Hurd isn’t well known on Wall Street or in the financial media but enjoys a solid a reputation among business experts as a relentless cost-cutter familiar with nearly every facet of management.

At HP, Hurd will receive a signing bonus of \$2 million and earn an annual base salary of \$1.4 million, according to a regulatory filing late Tuesday. He could earn substantially more under various short and long-term incentive programs, the document said.

Sony Hit with Mega Fine

San Jose, March 28 (AP) – A judge has ordered Sony Corp. to pay \$90.7 million to a company that develops technology that enhances video game realism but immediately stayed an order that would halt US sales of Sony’s popular PlayStation consoles.

San Jose-based Immersion Corp. sued Sony in 2002, saying the Japanese company violated two of its patents, using them to create tactile feedback features.

A federal jury in Oakland decided in favor of Immersion in September and ordered Sony to pay \$82 million in damages.

On Thursday, US District Judge Claudia Wilken affirmed the decision – and tacked on \$8.7 million in interest. She also ordered the sales ban but granted Sony an immediate stay pending the company’s expected appeal.

Sony has already paid Immersion \$7 million in compulsory license payments ordered by the court and will continue to do so each quarter, based on sales of infringing products, until there is a reversal or settlement.

Prosecutors Want 10 Years for Ex-Yukos Head

Moscow, March 29 (AP) – Russian prosecutors requested Tuesday that the former chief executive of the Yukos oil company be sentenced to ten years in a prison labor camp on tax and fraud charges.

Chief Prosecutor Dmitry Shokhin asked a Moscow court to find Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who has been jailed for more than a year, guilty.

Khodorkovsky and his business partner Platon Lebedev have been the target of a lengthy court process stemming from the allegedly illegal acquisition of shares in a fertilizer-component maker in 1994. However, the court ruled that the statute of limitations on the fertilizer case had expired and the only charges on which the two men could be sentenced were tax evasion and document fraud.

Khodorkovsky has repeatedly denied that he is guilty of any charges and noted that, under the law of the time, the deals were not illegal.

Yuanmingyuan Lake Lining Project Halted



The plan to install an impermeable membrane beneath the lake to preserve water supplies has come under criticism for potentially killing the lake.

By Wang Chun

The National Environmental Protection Bureau on Thursday ordered the halt to a project to fix up a lake bed at Yuanmingyuan Park, the Old Summer Palace, on grounds the plan had not received necessary approvals.

The project has become the subject of heavy criticism from people who fear it could reduce Beijing's already meager water supplies and harm the lake's environment.

Work to install an impermeable membrane beneath the park's main lake began on February 16 and is nearing completion.

Before the controversial lining was put down, workers drained the lake and

dredged out its muddy bottom. The coating that has been laid across the water body is made up of a layer of impermeable plastic and a flexible membrane meant to protect the plastic film from puncture.

Park officials have said the project is meant to preserve supplies of water in the lake, meaning its water level would only have to be refilled with outside water once a year instead of the current three times.

But many environmentalists have called it a potential environmental disaster.

"They are destroying the lifeline of Yuanmingyuan!" said Zhang Zhengchun, a professor at the College of Life Sciences at Lanzhou University.

The plastic membrane would inhibit natural circulation in the lake and therefore give rise to huge blossoming of anaerobic organisms, which release gases harmful to the water

and air alike, Zhang said.

He added he only heard about the plan when he recently came to Beijing for a meeting and decided to pay a visit to the park.

The project could disrupt the park's ecosystem and damage the beauty of the traditional Chinese garden, Zhang added.

"Yuanmingyuan is turning living water into dead water," he said.

Replying to such criticism, Tang Li, a park official, said Yuanmingyuan administrators had run environmental impact assessments before going ahead with the project. He said that the project cost far less than the rumored 150 million yuan, but did not provide more details.

Wu Bihu, director at the Center of Tourism Planning at Beijing University, said outside experts should be asked to come in to provide full assessments of the project's environmental, cultural and architectural impact before work continued.



Photo by Li Shuzhuan

First Central International School Set to Open

By Annie Wei

The area south of Chaoyang District's SOHO complex, is slated to be the grounds of the Beijing City International School (BCIS), the first international school in downtown Beijing.

The school, currently under construction, will occupy a large campus just off Jianguomen Bridge, putting it within the Central Business District and near Bedding's diplomatic compounds and in easy reach for expatriates living in residential compounds in Shunyi and along the Airport Expressway.

BCIS will be an independent, co-educational and non-profit day school funded by Yuechengjiantuan (Yuecheng Group), a real estate developer that is working on an up-scale residential project in the same area.

On Thursday morning, newly appointed BCIS headmaster Christopher Edmunds and Elvio Brianese, the school's architect, held a meeting to greet parents of prospective students.

"The school has purpose built facilities and strong international curriculum that blends the best of the East and West and will offer cultural and language exchange for its international and Chinese students," Edmunds, who has run schools in Togo, Malaysia, Cyprus, England and Germany, said.

Construction of the school should be completed in July and it would open its doors to students at the end of August, Edmunds said.

Plans Fixed to Build Qianmen Strolling Street

By Chu Meng

A new plan for the development of Qianmen Avenue, one of the last remnants of the business centers of old Beijing, should allow it to keep its distinctive local flavor while transforming it into a modern commercial pedestrian street by 2008. The blueprints were released on the official web site of the Beijing Municipal Development Planning Commission on Saturday.

Work on the project is slated to begin later this year. High priority will be given to preserve the historic area's old courtyard homes and alleyways.

The targeted 1.45-square kilometer area will be built to have four main zones for culture, food, shopping and entertainment. Trolley cars will also run to transport and entertain tourists.

Qianmen Avenue runs south from Tian'anmen Square, just to the west of Bedding's central axis. The area is home to 50 courtyards and hutongs listed as state-level heritage sites, as well as 80 famed shops that have been operating for over a century, such as the Liubiju sauce and pickle shop, Tongrentang drugstore, Ruifuxiang silk shop, Neiliansheng shoes store and Zhangyiyuan tea shop.



Greig McAllan (left), general manager of Tourism Australia Asia, gets artistic with Australian painter Theodore Mandziy (center).

Photo by Ayi

Go Down Under

By Zhao Hongyi

The It's All the Aussies! event, a collection of photographs, paintings, textiles and clothes, food and wines from Australia, was held in Beijing on Tuesday.

The promotion, run at the 798 Art Gallery in the hip Dashanzi Art District by Tourism Australia, the country's tourism bureau, was mainly aimed at well-off locals looking for "high-quality" leisure and travel experiences.

Greig McAllan, general manager of Tourism Australia Asia, emphasized the differences between Australia's tourism culture and resources and those of the US and Europe.

"We are not inviting you to have business trip to Australia," McAllan told local media. "Australia is a paradise for you to relax."

Over 251,300 tourists from the Chinese mainland visited Australia last year, up a dramatic 43 percent from 2003. "And that number does not include the 137,199 from Hong Kong and 98,760 from Taiwan," McAllan added.

Poor Pregnant Women Receives Cash Aid

By Wang Xiaoyuan

Yu Liqing smiled in relief after safely giving birth to a baby boy on Wednesday without having to pay medical fees, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported. Yu, a local woman who earns a low income, did not have the money to pay the fees for her care and was afraid she would not be able to give birth in the safe realm of a hospital. But all the costs of her labor were covered by the government of Fengtai District.

Yu was given the monetary assistance in keeping with new

local rules that went into effect in January meant to help pregnant women living below the poverty line. According to those rules, such women are entitled to receive 5,400 yuan to cover treatment and care at officially appointed hospitals between their twelfth week of pregnancy and forty-second day after giving birth.

Yu's husband told *Beijing Youth Daily* that he and his wife had applied for minimum living standard assistance in February. Yu is the first local woman to benefit from the scheme.



Yu Liqing and her newborn son

Photo by Cheng Tielian

Train Ferry Runs Aground in Guangdong

By Lin Chenxi

China's first cross-sea railway ferry, the Yuehaite No. 1, ran aground near a dock in Xuwen County, Guangdong Province on Sunday, apparently a victim of thick fog. None of the 293 people on board were injured, but the ferry's hull was damaged and it was grounded for about five hours.

Witnesses said visibility was only tens of meters due to the heavy fog when the ferry plowed aground. The passengers and crew on board were unable to get out until they were rescued by a team from Yuehai Railway

Co., which owns the ferry, and local maritime authorities.

The rescue team took three hours to get everyone aboard the ferry off to safety on dry land. The ship itself was finally dragged to the dock Sunday afternoon.

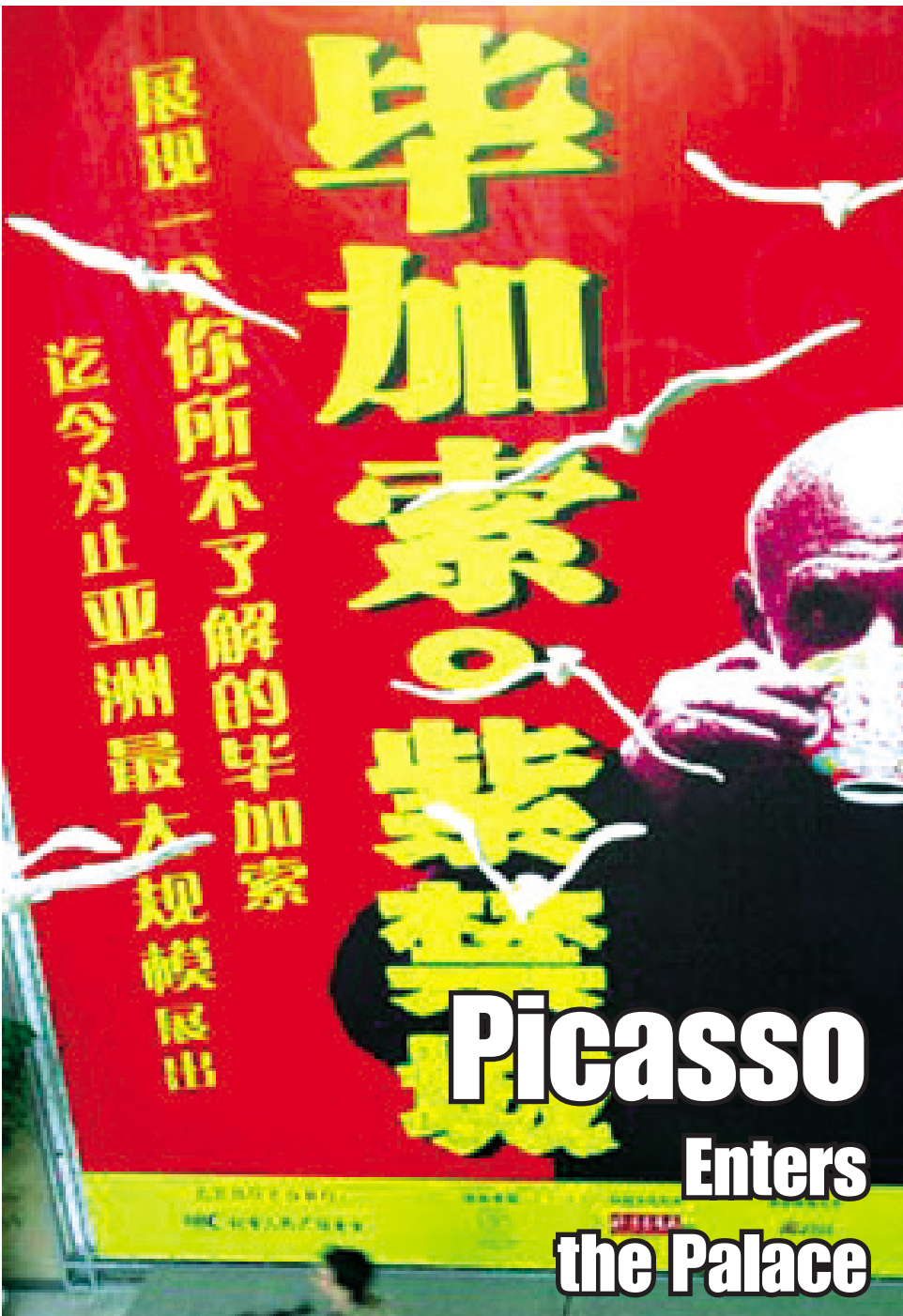
A company source said the accident was caused by the thick fog and a detailed investigation was underway.

But on Monday, the captain was blamed for causing the grounding, and investigations showed there were 22 shortcomings, including nine serious ones, that had not been handled before making sail.



No passengers were injured in the accident, and all were rescued from the ship in around three hours.

Photo by Chen Xingguang



by Jia Ting

Visitors to the Palace Museum have even more to see these days since the opening of the Picasso and the Forbidden City exhibition at the Beijing Imperial City Art Gallery last weekend. The show, sponsored by Beijing People's Broadcasting Station, runs through May 26.

The exhibition presents 265 paintings in eight collections by the 20th century Spanish master, including famed series such as *Les Tricornes*, *Celestine*, *Le Taurocorrida* and *La Nature*.

The priceless collection is on loan from the France-based Picasso Foundation, which owns the world's largest collection of Picasso works.

"Some works on display here are from Italian private art collectors, which visitors won't have the chance to see at other museums," Ms. Wu from the broadcasting station's public relations department told Beijing Today. "The cubist series *Les Tricornes* is being displayed to the public for the first time."

The show's Saturday opening reportedly attracted over 3,000 people, though many said they had difficulty understanding Picaso's works.

To help viewers better appreciate the paintings, organizers have recruited 28 volunteers to be on hand to explain the artworks.

Xinhua Photo

Split Taxi Lines Mean Shorter Airport Waits

By Kang Lu

Capital Airport Co.'s scheme to divide arriving passengers lining up to take taxis into long and short trip groups has shown signs of success in ending common practice among taxi drivers of refusing to take people not bound for distant destinations.

The plan has also drastically cut the long waits cabbies used to have to endure at the airport.

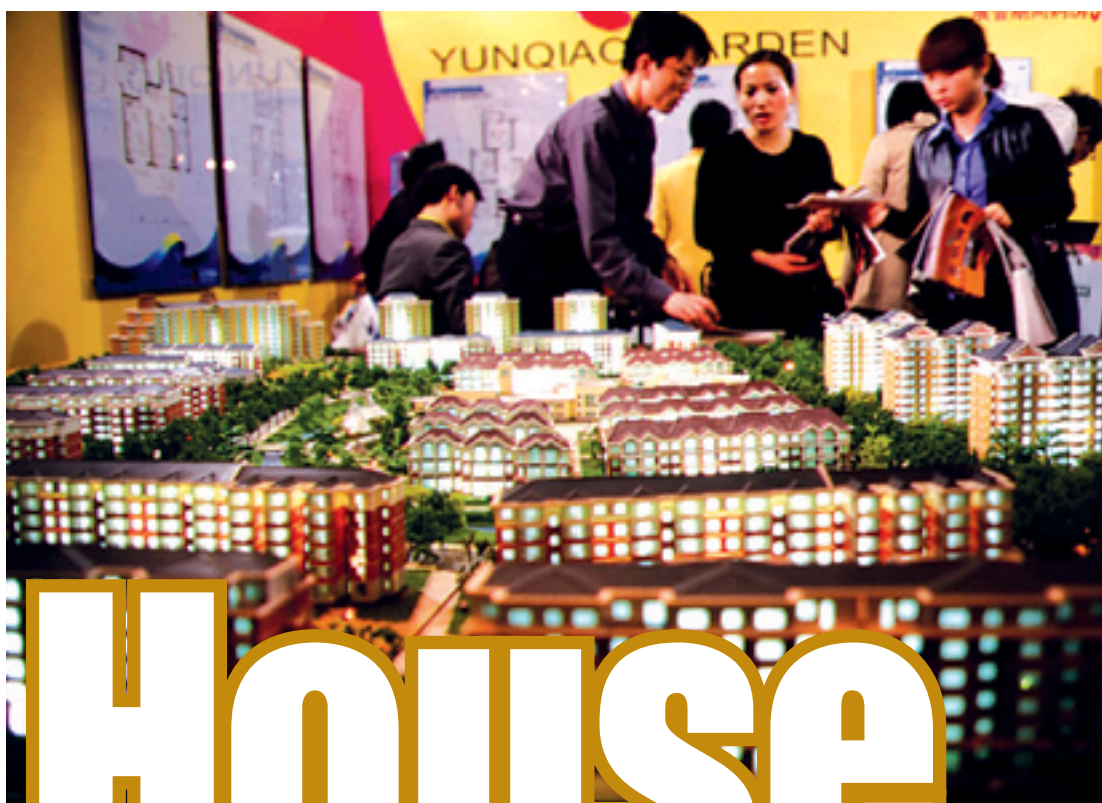
"The scheme has been in practice for almost two months and the results have been pretty good," Huang Gang, vice general manager of Capital Airport Co., said.

Before the division was implemented,

taxi drivers had to queue up, sometimes for as long as four hours, to get passengers, often leaving them unwilling to go short distances that offered little money for their time. Of course, that informal policy left many passengers unhappy as well.

A few shortcomings had to be worked out when the system was first implemented. Short trips were originally defined as less than 10 kilometers. That meant every destination in the downtown area (within the Third Ring Road) was past the limit.

Finally the limit was upped to 20 kilometers, putting destinations such as Wangjing, Jiuxianqiao and Yansha, which had been banes to cabbies for years, within range.



HOUSE,

To Buy or Not To Buy, It's a Hard Choice

By Jia Ting
Wu Xiaoling, deputy governor of People's Bank of China: **The real upward adjustment is projected to be between 0.07 and 0.32 percentage points, which will only have a limited impact on new homebuyers.**

By the end of February 2005, outstanding commercial housing loans exceeded 1.65 trillion yuan (200 billion US dollars), accounting for 23 percent of the commercial banks' medium and long-term loans. In Shanghai, state-owned and share-holding banks lent 49 per cent and 79 per cent, respectively, of their loans to real estate developers last year.

Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the housing loans policy of commercial banks from the demand side to guide consumers to have more reasonable expectations towards future housing prices.

As consumer-housing loans of commercial banks are mortgaged with the residential houses (which are usually assets of good quality), most banks are likely to apply the floor interest rate when granting home loans because of fierce market competition, and therefore the impact on individual consumers will be "very" limited.

The real upward adjustment is projected to be between 0.07 and 0.32 percentage points, which will only have a limited impact on new homebuyers.

This adjustment also provides for a relatively long period of adjustment for those residents who have already bought homes, because the signed housing loans contract will not be subjected to the adjusted interest rate until the beginning of next year.
Yi Xianrong, head of the Financial Development Division of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: **The central bank's decision to raise interest rates at this point of time was made for good reasons.**

The central bank's interest rate rise is moderate, but it signals a significant change in interest rate policy. Although the latest interest rate rise will have only a minor impact on both borrowing and lending, the central bank's decision to raise interest rates at this point of time was made for good reasons.

But higher mortgage rates will affect the demand side. The interest rate rise will increase house buyers' costs, squeeze out speculative demands and cause house prices to fall in the long term.

Despite the potential demand in China's real estate sector remaining high (considering the large population) the recent sharp increase in house prices is creating bubbles in the sector. Any bubbles will eventually either burst or be deflated.

Zhang Xuewu, an expert with the Price Monitor Center of the State Development and Reform Commission: **The move will slow the increase in housing prices in major cities and discourage residents from buying second or third homes.**

The higher interest rates and down payments will slow the growth of property prices. It should return to 5 percent in 2005 due to the changed policies, compared with a growth rate of 14.4 percent

A change in mortgage interest rates by the People's Bank of China, the central bank, as well as a change in down payment sizes, indicates an attempt by authorities to control house prices and reduce property speculation.

The central bank launched stricter policies for issuing housing loans on March 16. As of March 17, the preferential mortgage rate borrowers enjoyed since 1998 for private housing loans was ended. The newly released interest rate for home loans longer than five years rose at least 0.2 percent to approximately 5.51 percent. At the same time, the minimum down payment in cities with rapid housing price increases was raised from 20 to 30 percent.

The central bank's move was a sign that it is committed to resolving potential financial risks in the property market. But whether or not the move will drive down real estate prices and benefit homeowners is still in question.

The Central Bank has well-grounded concerns about the health of the property sector.

Last year, China's property prices rose by 14.4 per cent year-on-year, with that of residential prices hovering around 15.2 percent in particular, far higher than the rise of other price indices. Such sizzling growth means there are potential financial risks for banks, as many bank loans have been poured into property construction.

last year.

The ever-growing housing prices turn many citizens into "smart consumers." They purchase the houses by paying 20 percent of the total fees and borrow the remaining 80 percent from the banks. Then they lease the apartment and make the monthly payment to the bank with the rent. Alternatively, they might leave the houses vacant and sell it when the price increases.

These investors helped drive the housing prices higher and higher. The increased down payment will make housing speculation more difficult.

Andy Xie, Morgan Stanley's China economist: **Speculators have been pouring so much money into the sector that the new adjustments are unlikely to deter them for long.**

The latest measures are very mild. The measures may be effective for a month or so, but speculation could revive if the government does not follow up with more stringent measures.

The Central Government needs to get serious about deflating a property bubble which not only threatens the economy as a whole, but also exacerbates social tension.

In China, most people are beginning to lose hope of buying a property as prices escalate, but still

they see so many empty flats.

The measures may soothe public concerns by creating the impression that the government cares. However, if no further measures are introduced, speculation could flare up again.

Chen Lei, a civil servant in Beijing: **The mortgage rate has been increased twice within months while the deposit interest rate remains unchanged.**

Compared to the 14.4 percent increase on the property price last year, disposable income for us urban residents grew only by 7.7 percent. Now the housing loan interest rate has increased twice in such a short time while the deposit interest rate remains unchanged. It's hard for us to accept.

Liu Jianchang, researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS): **Families in some big cities have seen their household debt ratio rise to or near an unsustainable borrowing binge.**

According to the research I conducted regarding household debt ratio, (or the proportion of household debt surplus based on the disposable income, population and individual credit statistics released by National Bureau of Statistics) the situation in some major Chinese cities is critical.

Families in some big cities have seen their household debt ratio rise to or near 100 percent, which will prove to be an unsustainable borrowing binge. In Beijing, the ratio is 122 percent and in the red-hot real estate hub of Shanghai, the ratio is as high as 155 percent. Comparatively, the ratio is around 115 percent in the economically advanced United States.

Where will Migrant Workers get their Information?

By Annie Wei

Mingong (migrant workers), an important part of urban development, have been at the center of a number of problems facing modern China. The cases of unpaid wages to migrant workers continue to be exposed, and the gulf between the super rich, the middle classes and the migrant workers is constantly widening. These examples are just part of a serious situation which society as a whole must face.

The latest problem surrounds the *Baogongtou*, the headmen who introduce migrant workers to work and take charge of them at construction sites in urban areas. Due to poor communication networks between rural areas with low employment opportunities and urban areas with high employment opportunities, the middle men have prospered. However, while the *Baogongtou* have introduced migrant workers to job opportunities, cases of exploitation of migrant workers have also occurred, where the migrant workers were compelled to pay a portion of their wages to the *Baogongtou*.

Beijing Municipal Labor and Social Security Bureau (BMLSSB) and Beijing Construction Committee issued a notice on Saturday dealing with the construction industry's problems. The notice says that the headmen are not allowed to take any part of migrant workers' wages. Industry sources have stated that this will essentially force the *Baogongtou* out of the construction labor business in Beijing within the year.

The notice also stated that construction companies should further regulate contracts with rural migrant workers. The document clearly displays a sample contract between migrant workers and the construction company, to prevent disputes or possibilities that the construction company may renege on its responsibilities to an injured worker. The notice requires that migrant workers' wages should not be lower than Beijing's standard minimum wage. It also requires that the wages should be paid to the workers within a certain time, without the involvement of a middle-man or agent.

While this will be a comfort to existing migrant workers, the issue of how new migrant workers will get jobs is unresolved.

Wu Antai, director of supervisory department of BMLSSB: **Improve the "public order" of middlemen on the construction sites**

There were over 900,000 migrant workers on construction sites in 2004, with over 90 percent of them covered by contracts. We found out disputes between construction companies and migrant workers with no contracts are much higher than those with contracts. That's why we decided to improve the "public order" (organization, efficiency and honesty) of middlemen on the construction sites.

The Beijing News (Sunday): **The government should be able to provide a replacement service before ruling out the middlemen**

The notice requires construction companies to hire migrant

workers through a formal and legal employment agency. However, many employment agencies in town charge more than migrant workers can afford. There were many reports that people have been cheated by employment agencies. The *Baogongtou*'s information can be delivered to a vast area of rural China. If the migrant workers can only get information after they are in town they have to pay extra expenses for food and accommodation before attaining a job. Therefore, the government should provide a replacement service before sacking all the *Baogongtou*, including a reliable information system between urban and rural areas, a complete system to guarantee their benefits, and good supervision of employment agencies that can provide cheap and reliable information. Also, legal help and government supervision should be available in the case of injured migrant workers.

Ben Steele, a former American fullbright researcher in migrant workers in Beijing: **it's not difficult for migrant workers to job information.**

Usually, getting job information is not difficult for migrant workers. Local networks are very strong and migrants usually have contacts from their hometown when they arrive. People do not randomly show up: they are informed of opportunities by the network. However, the middleman is part of the network; a necessary part of the information pipeline. Some middlemen exploit workers but some are probably honest.

Meanwhile, the problems causing unpaid salaries arise from the fact that there are so many migrants seeking jobs. In order for them to secure employment they are at the mercy of the employer. The employer can set his or her terms and force the migrant worker to accept unfavorable payment terms.

Sun Wusheng, (who used to be a middleman in Xi'an three years ago but turned himself into an expert to help migrant workers get their unpaid salaries): **migrant workers have very little understanding of their legal rights.**

I used to be one of those migrant workers who could not get my wages. I think there are some situations of migrant workers who could not get their wages back, including a construction company's customer delaying their payment for the project, private construction companies

without any proper legal documents as well as some construction companies maliciously delaying migrant workers' wages. One thing which I think is very important is that migrant workers have very little understanding of their legal rights. I hope the relevant government bodies can set up some department to help them with basic legal knowledge.

Chan Yan, an employee from IBM China Software Development Lab and a volunteer from LEAD (Let Education Achieve Dreams) non-profit organization: **I do not think they realize the difference between their life situation and that of others.**

Currently, one of the programs that LEAD does is to teach the kids of migrant workers. But migrant workers on our programs are people from rural areas who came to Beijing to do small business, such as selling small products. So the way they get their jobs is different from the migrant workers on the construction sites. As far as I know, most migrant workers who work on construction sites are introduced by *Baogongtou*. To improve their standard of living, apart from government's complementary policies, they need to increase their level of awareness. I do not think they realize the difference between their life situation and that of others. What's worse, they think that's the life they are supposed to live with.

Gabriel Warren, overseas development manager of Lenovo Asia Info: **It should be agreed between the construction company and local government.**

How to guarantee migrant workers' wages: It should be agreed between the construction company and local government. If you look at America, the American government has its employment agency. People who look for jobs do not have to pay because it's a public service. But, well, the jobs introduced by the employment agency in America are not like the jobs that the *Mingong* do here. The situation of the *Mingong* here might be similar to the illegal Mexican workers in US. However, the Mexican workers are not US nationals and the government does not protect them, and they do not want to be found by the US government. But the *Mingong* here are Chinese nationals, and the Chinese government should look after them.



The migrant workers issue has been at the center of a number of problems facing modern China

photos by Li Shuzhuan

Soundbites

"Hell no, I won't go," a defiant UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** told a reporter when asked if it was time to resign for the good of the world body. The UN Secretary-General has rejected any possibility he might step aside amid accusations of scandal. "It was not unusual for problems to arise in institutions as large as the United Nations. You deal with the problem and you draw the lessons and move on. I have lots of work to do, and I'm going to go ahead and do it now." *Annan made his comments after investigators probing the now defunct UN's oil-for-food program in Iraq said the secretary-general did not exert any influence on the \$10 million annual contract awarded to a Swiss company that employed his son, Kajo.*

"China will not revalue its currency to rectify bilateral trade imbalances," **Zhou Xiaochuan**, Governor of the People's Bank of China, said on Tuesday, despite US pressure to use the exchange

rate to make Chinese exports less competitive. "China's exchange rate policy mainly takes into account the international balance of payments and overall relations with the world economy, rather than the trade surplus or deficit with individual countries. Our main mission in the future is to improve the Renminbi exchange rate formation mechanism, rather than simply adjust the exchange rate," said **Zhou Xiaochuan**.

"The human race is living beyond its means. Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted." *1,360 scientists from 95 countries - some of them world leaders in their fields - warned on Wednesday that the almost two-thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth is being degraded by human pressure.* (by Jia Ting)

Consumers Keep Faith in Brand Names



Photo by Zhang Shuo

By Wang Chun

Several international name brands, such as KFC, SK-II and Johnson & Johnson, have come under fire on charges of using dangerous chemicals in their products in China in recent months. But a recent survey conducted by the Chinese Social Investigation Center says that Chinese customers have not lost their faith in big brands, though they are becoming increasingly discerning in their choices of products.

The fieldwork for the study was conducted through telephone interviews among 1,500 consumers in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Zengzhou, Changsha, Shenyang and Xiamen.

When asked if the incidents had raised the mental burdens of buyers, 34 percent of respondents answered yes, 21 percent said no and 45 percent were undecided. Just under 30 percent said the incidents had increased their doubts about the quality of name brand food and cosmetic products, while 39 percent said they did not share such doubts and another 30 percent said it depended on circumstances.

Despite some misgivings, respondents showed a high level of trust in major marks, for what they said they saw as strict quality control and solid after-sales service. Customers' dedication to established brands could spell bad news for new marks and companies trying to break into the increasingly competitive domestic market.

Kentucky Fried Chicken has been hit by the Sudan I scare, and even confirmed that some of its products, now pulled from the market, contained the dangerous dye. Perhaps due to its quick action, the restaurant brand scored the highest ranking in the survey in terms of damage control.

Yum! Brands, the owner of KFC, has launched a successful campaign to protect the brand that has included not only going public about Sudan I and pulling products, but also investigating the cause of the chicken crisis and working with government departments to test its products for safety. The public appears to have responded well to the efforts.

More than half (51%) of respondents said Chinese companies showed poor abilities in damage control and suggested they overcome their shortcomings by increasing their social consciousness.

Ignorance of Hepatitis B Fueling Discrimination, Bad Treatment

By Dong Nan

China has 130 million Hepatitis B virus carriers and 30 million people suffering from the disease. However, a survey released by the Chinese Medical Association (CMA) last month found that even among urban hepatitis B carriers, people knew little about the disease.

The survey was conducted among 425 hepatitis B sufferers in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Wuhan and Shenyang, 84 percent of whom had received senior high school education or higher.

Half of the respondents did not know how hepatitis B was transmitted – by blood transfer, mother-to-fetus and sex – and wrongly thought that the virus could pass via saliva and skin contact.

CMA professor Zhuang Hui said misunderstandings put great pressure on hepatitis B carriers and sufferers in the form of widespread discrimination.

One third of the respondents said they hoped to completely get rid of the virus from their bodies and 35 percent thought that hepatitis B could be fully cured. But there was no cure for the disease and current medicine could only hold back its spread, Zhuang said.

Another CMA survey done in the same cities found that more than half of 2,189 advertisements for hepatitis B medicines and therapies had “complete cure” or “eradicate” as key words. Only 19 percent of Hepatitis B patients received proper treatment, the study showed.

Zhuang said that CMA experts were working on a formal treatment guide for Hepatitis B patients, which would be published this July. He said he hoped the guide would help patients get correct information and reduce discrimination toward people with the disease.

By Dong Nan

China's booming economy, rising affluence and the indifference of domestic buyers have made the country a major driver of illegal logging in Asia that threatens to destroy some of the world's last remaining tropical forests as soon as within this year.

“Chinese people might be modest users of timber and paper, and the average person in the US consumes 17 times as much wood as a person from China,” Zhu Chunquan from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said, “yet with a fifth of the world's population and rapid economic growth, China has an inevitably large and growing impact on the world's forest resources.”

A report entitled “China's Wood Market, Trade and Environment,” recently released by a research group from Zhu's organization, said China's increasing timber imports could posed a potential threat to the environment of timber exporting countries where there were proper management and legislation efforts and exacerbated existing problems of illegal and destructive logging in those countries.

Increasing imports

According to the report, China's domestic forests and tree plantations produced around 79 million cubic meters of wood for industrial use in 2003, less than half of the 173 cubic meters required for domestic use and export. Domestic demand drove the harvesting of 138 million cubic meters of trees and Chinese factories absorbed an additional 35 million cubic meters of wood for the manufacture of products for export to other countries.

Zhu said China was a relatively poor country in terms of forests, as most of its original forests were cleared centuries ago and over-harvesting in recent decades had depleted many of the remaining forests of mature timber trees.

In 1998, China responded to disastrous floods of the Yangtze and other rivers, serious sandstorms in Beijing and declining productivity in timber forests, all results of deforestation, by initiating policy reforms including logging bans and incentives to restore tree cover in erosion-prone areas.

A likely effect of those logging bans and depleted stocks of standing timber was that logging in China's natural forests would provide an increasingly small proportion of the wood needed to satisfy timber consumption, the report said. Maturing plantations should help fill the gap, but China still faced a severe shortage of wood, particularly large-diameter logs.

The report pointed out that China's wood imports, including timber, pulp and paper, had increased to 94 million cubic meters in 2003 from 25 million cubic meters in 1993. Russia, Indonesia and Malaysia were the three largest suppliers of timber to China in 2003, when China's combined timber imports from those countries totaled around 24 million cubic meters, more than half of its net timber imports of 42 million cubic meters.

New Zealand, Gabon, Germany, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, the US, Canada and Myanmar made up a second tier of countries that each supplied more than 800,000 cubic meters of timber to China in 2003, the report said. China also imported pulp and paper, to the tune of



Environmental Group Exposes Problems with China's Timber Trade

52 million cubic meters in 2003 (excluding recycled paper) from Indonesia, Russia, Canada, Chile, South Korea, the US and Brazil.

The WWF estimated that China would need to import a massive 125 million cubic meters of wood and wood products in the year 2010 to meet rising demand.

Impact on exporters

Much of the wood imported by China was sourced from countries that lacked sound forest management and controls, and China was one of the major destinations for wood that may have been illegally harvested or traded – especially from Russia and Indonesia – the group said.

The volume of exports of logs from Russia to China has grown dramatically in recent years, reaching over 14 million cubic meters in 2003, up from only 300,000 cubic meters in 1996.

The report said that Russia's timber industry shrunk during the 1990s due to privatization of large state-owned enterprises. While national timber production decreased, logging was concentrated around population centers and convenient export points.

Demand for wood in Japan, South Korea and, increasingly, China, has driven heavy over-logging of accessible forests in southern areas of far eastern Russian, including the Primorsky, Khabarovsk, Sakhalin and Amur regions and in eastern Siberia. The situation has been made worse by chronic waste, such as the loss of felled logs in the collection and hauling process, logging of irreplaceable permafrost ecosystem areas and poor fire control.

Indonesia has around 100 million hectares of natural forests, making up around 10 percent of the earth's remaining tropical forests, second only to Brazil in terms of terrestrial biodiversity. Yet in the 1990s, Indonesia lost an estimated two million

hectares of forest per year. This has been exacerbated by the readiness of export markets, including China, to accept Indonesian wood with little concern for the circumstances in which it was harvested.

Timber exports from Indonesia to China had surged in recent years, the WWF said. Although Japan remained the major market for Indonesian timber, China's imports of timber from Indonesia reached more than three million cubic meters in 2003. That was about one seventh of Indonesia's total timber exports, and China was the major buyer of Indonesia's pulp and paper as well. Growth in the capacity of Indonesia's pulp and paper industry had far outpaced progress in securing sustainable wood supply, and the industry's overcapacity was a major driver of indiscriminate and illegal logging, it noted.

The report said that the volumes recorded in Indonesia's official customs statistics were less than those recorded in China's import statistics (20 percent less in 2002). The figures suggested that in 2002, at least around 2.6 million cubic meters of wood-derived products were undeclared in Indonesia and shipped to China.

Although the statistical discrepancy did not mean that all 2.6 million cubic meters were harvested illegally, with logging in Indonesia running more than 75 percent above the cut the domestic Ministry of Forestry allows, it was highly probable that a majority of the unreported volume came from loggers whose harvesting courses were unsupervised and not bound by sustainable cutting levels or they had logged on parks and riparian reserves, the report said.

In fact, within the timber harvesting industry, both licensed and unlicensed operators were engaged

in reckless logging practices that caused excessive canopy gaps, soil compaction, blocked streams, landslides and damage to residual trees, it said. Those impacts inhibited natural regeneration and increased vulnerability to fire.

The report suggested that if current behavior in Indonesia continued, lowland, non-swampy forests would become effectively extinct in Sumatra by the end of 2005 and in Kalimantan soon after 2010, and extinction of swamp forests could follow by 2015.

Suggestions

“China's wood buyers are unlikely to show concern for the environmental or legal credentials of their suppliers, without market or regulatory pressure to do so,” the report complained.

The Chinese government should motivate domestic wood buyers towards more responsible sourcing by measures such as prohibiting the import of wood without verification that it had been sourced legally and setting green procurement policies and trade agreements with supplier countries that addressed forestry issues, it said.

But Zhu pointed out to *Beijing Today* that the chain of international wood trade was complicated and it was hard to define what imported wood was legal and which not. For example, in Indonesia, wood dealers could get illegal timber at a price of \$10 per cubic meter, buy an export license for \$40 and then export the illegal timber to Chinese buyers in what would look like a legal transaction.

The Chinese sides could not be held responsible in such cases, Zhu added. He said that only through cooperation between governments of different countries, international organizations, customs and businesses could the dire situation of Asia's forests improve.

Photos provided by China Timbers Net



By Xiaoyuan Wang

An investigation is under way in Hengyang, Hunan Province after civil services failed to come to the aid of a young man who had his legs broken after he was hit by a motorbike. Zhang Hengsheng was hit by the motorbike on March 7. Over the next few days, various passers-by attempted to get help for him but no one came. Zhang was found dead on March 12.

Struggling for life

Zhang Hengsheng, 29, was a college graduate but was unemployed. At about 9:30pm on March 7, he was walking along National Highway 107 having just had an argument with his parents. Suddenly, he was struck by a motorcycle. The motorcyclist immediately sped away, leaving Zhang on the road with fractures in both legs. Zhang crawled off the road and into the

see him.

We're not to blame

Zhang's death caused considerable anger, not just among his family but also the local citizens. The parents have sued the Xiangtan County traffic and civil affairs authorities, claiming their dereliction of duty led to the death of their son. The family said traffic police and a civil affairs official refused to investigate or offer help after receiving reports of the accident. The Xiangtan Public Security Bureau said it had started its own investigation.

The county traffic police department maintains that they received no reports of any accident on March 7 before 11:30pm. "Peng must have dialed the wrong number," said officer Liu Guangzheng. He said he was informed of the accident on March 8. He sent two traffic policemen to the site to



The accident victim: Zhang Hengsheng

Accident Victim LEFT TO DIE



A villager points to the spot where Zhang was found dead.

farm field by the highway. Soon after, he was discovered by villager Peng Shuping. At 9:35pm, Peng dialed the county's police hot line 110. The operator gave him the number of the county traffic police. Peng dialed twice and was given the number of a nearby traffic policeman. However, even though Peng dialed again and again, no one answered the phone. Jiang Zhengjun, owner of a small bicycle repair shop nearby, had witnessed the accident. He helped Peng move Zhang under a tree and cover him with some dry grass. After that they both went home.

The next morning, Luo Dongmeng, a 60-year-old villager saw Zhang crawling to a pond for water. She fetched the boss of the village clinic, Jiang Donglin. Zhang gave Jiang his name and home number. Jiang then called Guo Xuejun at the County Police Station office which is about two kilometers from the accident site. Guo contacted the second team of the county traffic department, and referred Jiang to Wang Qingwen, head of the local civil affairs office. To Jiang's surprise, Wang asked him "Is the man dead?" Jiang said no. "Then go and get a doctor for him, and inform us when he dies," said Wang, according to Jiang who was struck by this callous response. Jiang then called Zhang's home, but no one was there.

On March 9, it started to rain. The temperature dropped to minus 3 degrees. Zhang was found dead in the snow on the morning of March 12. Over the four previous days, no one from any security or civil authority had been to

investigate. "No one was there," said Liu. "So it seemed the victim must have left by himself."

Liu Jiangnan of Chaen'si Town Police Station also professed innocence. "I was very surprised when I was told that the dead youth was the one hurt in the accident. We are only in charge of the local security. It was not a big traffic

Department of Publicity of Xiangtan County Committee and Xiangtan Public Security Bureau notified journalists that according to their internal regulations, 11 staff members would be disciplined, with penalties including being forced to resign.

However, when *Beijing Youth Daily* contacted some of the 11 people, they said they had not



The gate of Xiangtan County Traffic Police

accident, so it was supposed to be referred to the traffic police."

Meanwhile, Wang Qingwen of Chaen'si Town Civil Affairs Office denied asking to be informed when Zhang was dead. "I never said anything like that. That would be too ruthless. I am just too busy. There are only three people in the office, but we are in charge of thirty one villages."

Penalties?

On March 29, officials from the

been told about any such penalty yet. The first person *Beijing Youth Daily* contacted was Liu Jiangnan, the vice director of Chaen'si Town police station. Liu said that he had not received any notification of a penalty. Guo Xuejun, the town policeman on duty on the night of March 8 is being investigated and has not yet returned to work. Liu Guangzheng, director of the second team of Xiangtan County traffic police department,

who got Guo's call and sent two traffic policemen to the accident site without result, is being investigated too. He also said he was unaware of any penalty.

The court of Yueyang District, Xiangtan City has decided to launch a new investigation starting April 28.

Respect for life?

Zhang Hengsheng's death roused discussion about the service characteristics of administrative authorities and the basic respect for life. While the authorities are supposed to bear the obligation of guaranteeing people's safety and wellbeing, Zhang's case indicates a lack of willingness to take responsibility. Readers wrote to *China Daily* expressing their anger towards the various departments after the case: "The present emergency reporting system has been abused by the police personnel and departmental red tape. Someone will have to be punished for Zhang's death," said one reader. "Traffic police and civil affairs officials should bear responsibility for this accident. Officials should recognize everyone's life is important, even a farmer's," one student said.

Although some of the local villagers tried to help Zhang, none of them dared to take him home. Most of them were afraid of legal trouble. It was also obvious that they had long since lost trust in the local officials. Zhang Hengsheng's last words were "Thank you" for the food and care he received from the local villagers.

(sources from *Beijing Youth Daily*, *Xinhua News Agency* and *China Daily*)

Relief Funds Appropriated for Civic Construction

By Nie Zhiyang

According to China's regulations on the use of donated relief funds and materials, they should only be allocated for their specified purpose. But a controversy in Shanxi Province has raised suspicions that these publicly donated funds are being misused.

CCTV's Focus program was recently tipped off that the Shanxi Bureau of Civil Affairs had appropriated large sums from a welfare and disaster fund donated by the public to build its new office and dormitory buildings.

To investigate the allegations, a reporter from CCTV went to Shanxi to look into the situation.

Splendid new buildings

Yifen street in Taiyuan is home to an impressive new office block for the Bureau of Civil Affairs of Shanxi, next to which is the bureau's equally lavish dormitory building. The office building has already come into operation, and the dormitory building is nearly complete.

From the outside, the dormitory building's large French windows stand out. The building is divided into various units with the smallest one covering 157 square meters and divided into three bedrooms plus a sitting room and dining room; the largest unit, at just over 190 square meters, has an extra bedroom.

Where does the money come from? The official responsible for capital construction of the Bureau of Civil Affairs in Shanxi told reporters that the bureau's workers had raised the money themselves, in accordance with the standard of 1,700 yuan per square meter.

Other officials from the bureau insisted that the accounts for the dormitory building and office building were totally separate, and that no public funds had been diverted.

Welfare fund diverted

The total cost of constructing the office building was 50 million yuan, 10 million of which was allocated by the provincial government, while the bureau was to be responsible for raising the rest itself. In trying to discover how the bureau had managed this, the CCTV reporter came across a document from the fiscal division of the bureau indicating that 2,600,000 yuan had been drawn from one source. Further investigation revealed that the source was the welfare fund.

So how come money that was supposed to be used to serve the elderly, disabled, orphans and wounded or disabled soldiers was used in this way? Wang Xinfeng, vice director of the fiscal division of the Bureau of Civil Affairs, explained that the chiefs



Yang Xiuling, vice director of the Bureau of Civil Affairs in Shanxi

of the bureau had decided to employ the 2,600,000 yuan in building an old person's activity center, which is inside the office building.

The reporters discovered that the activity center consisted of three small rooms on the seventh floor. Two pingpong tables are in one room, with a billiards table and several chess tables in another; the third room has some basic exercise equipment.

20 million for a storage center

The largest sum to be drawn from public donations was 20 million yuan, allocated by the provincial government to go towards building a storage center for disaster relief goods and materials.

The name and purpose of this office building has since changed consistently, from both office and storage for disaster relief goods and materials at the beginning, to provincial storage center and center for disaster relief and welfare lottery when applying for construction funds. None of these changes were referred to the office building of the Bureau of Civil Affairs for approval.

When asked whether the allocation of 20 million yuan would have been approved if the building was not, after all, to be used as a relief storage center, Hou Weibin, assistant investigator of the fiscal division of the Bureau, said that it wouldn't.

But during the investigation, reporters found that the alleged storage center, accounting for more than half of the total construction cost, was just a three-story building covering an area of less than 3,000 square meters, in contrast with the total construction area of 13,000 square meters.

And while the office building of the Bureau of Civil Affairs came into operation last October, the storage center for disaster relief supplies has not yet been completed.

So what has happened to the 20 million yuan allocated for the storage center? A report submitted by the bureau to the relevant provincial leaders in 2003 may offer a clue. It said that given the lack of funds for the construction of office buildings, the bureau wanted the provincial government to divert relief funds of ten to twenty million yuan to make up the difference for the current and following year.

Many people are concerned about the situation. It appears that one fund allocation of 2,600,000 yuan has yielded just a few activity rooms with basic equipment, while 20 million has so far produced an unfinished three-story warehouse.



Office building of the Bureau of Civil Affairs

CCTV Photos

'The Musketeer' Takes Aim at the Big Time



Photo by Wei Tong

By Catherine Peng

In casual sportswear and white sneakers, Ding Junhui sits by the billiard table, a naive smile creeping across his face, just like any other carefree teenager. If it weren't for the £200 pro cue clenched in his hand, nobody would associate the 17-year-old youngster with the snooker prodigy he is.

He has just sailed into the quarterfinals of the 2005 Masters at Wembley, one of the world's most prestigious snooker events. He has been called 'the Tiger Woods of Snooker' due to his abilities just 16. At 15 he was the World Under-21 Snooker Champion, the Asian Open Champion and an Asian Games Gold Medallist. Most leading snooker analysts are convinced that the world roster will be shuffled by Ding. He could be Asia's first World Snooker Champion within three to five years.

Breaking the British stranglehold

Nicknamed "little Ding" by his elder teammates, the 17-year-old prodigy Ding Junhui is currently spearheading the Chinese team in the 2005 World Snooker China Open at Beijing Haidian Stadium. It runs from March 27th until April 3rd.

As the seventh event of the 2004-05 World Snooker calendar, and the last before the highly anticipated Embassy World Championships. This is a very important event in the snooker-rankings, with a star-studded roster of 48 top pros, including most of the world's Top 16.

The professional snooker circuit is dominated by British players, and the Top 16 attending this event includes seven times world champion Stephen Hendry from Scotland, "The Tornado" Jimmy White from England, and former world champions John Higgins from Scotland and Mark Williams from Wales. The only member of the Top 16 who hails from outside the British Isles is Australian Quinten Hann, the world No. 14.

Snooker has been a UK-centric sport for too long. Snooker, they say, began in Jubbulpore in India in 1875. Over its 130 year development, it has gone from a wealthy man's parlor game to an internationally televised sport, with millions participating all over the globe. And right now, many of snooker's leading players like Stephen Hendry, Paul Hunter, Mark Williams, Matthew Stevens, John Higgins, Steve Davis and Jimmy White are here in Beijing to compete.

In addition, 16 leading Chinese and Asian players will be competing in the initial wild card round. The hopes of the most Chinese fans are focused chiefly on former world under-21

champion Ding Junhui, the 17-year-old prodigy who has already made a significant impact on the sport's professional circuit. But Ding, currently the No. 1 player in China and No. 57 in the world ranking, is quite self-assured. He doesn't feel intimidated by the big names.

On the night of March 28th, Ding, defeated the world No. 38, Mark Davis of Britain by 5-2 and qualified for the China Open. In the first round he will play Peter Ebdon of Britain, who is the world No. 9 and also his long-time practice partner.

"Though I still need a bit more experience to go to the next level, my goal is to beat the Britons," said Ding, an introverted yet prize-minded young man with firmness etched into his laddish face.

The emergence of Ding is putting China on the map of what has been an overwhelmingly British sport, and may yet break the British stranglehold on the game's major titles.

Natural ability

Dubbed 'The Oriental Star', Ding showed his snooker talent very early in life.

He was born on April 1, 1987 in Jiangsu Province's Yixing, a peaceful community 180 kilometers away from Shanghai and world-renowned for its exquisite *zisha* teapots. His father was once a vender who then moved into the snooker club business, and hence the little colorful balls became Ding's favorite toy throughout his childhood.

Initiated into the sport by his father, Ding began learning snooker at the age of nine, joining his father and friends whenever he was bored. Only one year later, Ding was unbeatable in his hometown. Systematic training started when he turned 11, when he began participating in senior events even before his height equaled that of a cue.

But it was not long before his adult opponents found themselves incapable of containing the precocious youth. Ding won his first prize by finishing third in an Asian Invitational Tournament when he was only 13 years old.

Ding shot to international prominence in 2002, when he surprised the public as the youngest-ever Asian Under-21 Champion at the tender age of 15, and he rapidly progressed to become the first Chinese snooker champion, winning the Asian Snooker Championship, and the IBSF World Under-21 Championship the same year. But the real shock came as Ding twice bested then world No. 1 Mark Williams in the Hong Kong and Bangkok invitational events in August 2003.

Due to his outstanding amateur record during 2002-03, it wasn't

long before Ding became a professional player and the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) awarded him a wildcard to play as a professional in the UK-based 2003-04 World Snooker Main Tour, which began in September 2003.

In his first year as a pro player in the UK, Ding made good progress, rocketing from No. 158 to No. 57 in the world rankings. He even defeated the world No. 16 Joe Perry in the first round of the Masters Championship at Wembley in February 2004, which was the first time a Chinese snooker player had squeezed into the last 16 of a pro snooker event. In the process, Ding became the youngest player into the last 16 in the 29 year history of the Wembley Masters.

"These are the happy years in my life. Happiness comes from playing snookers, and winning," recalls Ding coyly. **'Musketeer' right after 'Rocket'**

Whether it is Brighton, Bangkok or Beijing, Ronnie O'Sullivan, the flamboyant world No. 1, nicknamed "The Rocket" for his strong and quick shots, is snooker's most powerful attraction.

So it comes as no surprise when Ding reveals that O'Sullivan is his favorite player. Ding is quick to point out, however, that while "I appreciate his game, I'm not thinking of becoming another O'Sullivan".

In the 2005 Masters at Wembley this February, Ding,

awarded a wildcard entry for the second time, sailed into his first-ever major quarterfinal with an impressive 6-1 win over Ireland's former world champion Ken Doherty at the Riley's Club Masters at Wembley. The 17-year-old Chinese starlet included a brilliant 141 clearance in the opening frame. The combination ensured Ding's advancement to the last eight – and a face off against his favorite player, Ronnie O'Sullivan.

Ding was stopped by "The Rocket", the eventual winner, in the quarterfinals. But he was relieved

when O'Sullivan missed the last red having reached 107 in frame five.

Ding's 141 remained the highest break of the tournament and earned him a £10,000 prize.

The news swept across England. The BBC made a live broadcast of the interview with Ding Junhui, treatment usually reserved for the top players in World Championships. And *The Mirror* newspaper listed Ding as the world's third fastest shooter and named him "The Musketeer", after the swashbuckling French heroes of antiquity.

Ding's impressive performance won praise from his opponents. After the match Doherty said: "Ding has a good all-round game. He is quite mature for 17 and looks very relaxed on the big stage. He just needs a bit more experience to go to the next level and that comes from playing in tournaments like this. Once he tightens up he's going to be an even tougher opponent."

Ronnie O'Sullivan himself tipped Ding to be a major title winner in the future. "Ding is very strong in taking the initiative to attack. He is quite good in a match. I believe Ding will become the world champion some day. He certainly will be a big star."

A strong wish

Great things are expected of Ding. However, behind all the glories and flowers, there is a thorny memory that touches a sore spot in Ding's heart.

Before the successes of 2002, Ding's family tried everything to support his training on their meager income. To find a qualified coach for

Ding, his father gave up his small business and took his son to Dongwan in Southeast China's Guangdong Province, where the national snooker team trains.

Ding still cannot bear to look back the first few months in Dongwan. To support Ding's training in the local snooker club, his father worked as a casual laborer. With no extra money for rent, father and son lived in the five square meter space separated out by wood partitions at the aisle end of the club's dormitory, with no decent beds, just a board supported by some

abandoned trestles. Mosquitoes and moisture made it hard to sleep.

The savings eventually ran out as Ding took part in more and more competitions. The father made the hardest call to his wife at home, asking her to sell their house, which was the family's last possession. Ding's mother was crying when she, bringing with her only a few clothes, arrived at their partitioned narrow 'room'.

"Those days were too difficult for us. Parental love was all that supported me." Seeing all this, Ding, a sensible and introverted kid, buried his tears and became more diligent and determined, as a strong wish was growing in his heart – to buy a new house for his parents with the money he earned with his cue.

Even now, as a pro player living in England, Ding has not forgotten his wish, and he practices as hard as always – eight hours a day from 10 am to 6 pm, without a day off.

His impressive performances have attracted a great deal of business interest as well. First Advice, a British sports agency, has come to an informal agreement with Ding, footing the bill for his expenses in Britain this season. The agency accommodates Ding in a snooker academy in the Northamptonshire area, where he practices daily with big names like James Wattana and Peter Ebdon, which has greatly sharpened Ding's competitive edge.

Well on the way to his goal

Few players make much impact in their debut season, but experts agree Ding has a natural ability which, coupled with more experience, should help him to achieve better results in the future.

"Ding is the best player since Ronnie O'Sullivan, or maybe even better. He is the future Tiger Woods of Snooker," believes Ebdon, the former world champion and Ding's daily practice partner.

Though hailing from the hometown of the *zisha* teapot, Ding actually has no interest in anything other than his pursuit for the top honors in cue sports.

"No, I don't know much about *zisha* clay," says Ding, in his characteristic mumble. Although he has headlined the World Snooker League, edging out several high-profile players, he remains a low-key teenager whose response to every question is succinct, even a little vague.

His only ambition is to be one of the world snooker elite, like his favorite player, Ronnie O'Sullivan. There's certainly nothing wrong with emulating the 'The Rocket', and Ding appears to be well on the way to achieving that goal.

“He could be the Tiger of the Woods Snooker.”
Former World Champion, Peter Ebdon.



Awakening: La France Mandarine

By Li Ruifen

Exchange and communication among regional cultures and national arts stimulate the vitality and creativity of art. Although developing their diversified cultures in two separate continents, China and France are similar: centuries-old civilizations with profound cultural legacies. It is actually because of the similarity that we are able to enjoy the exhibition "Stimulation: La France Mandarine", which assembles a bridge connecting the past, present and future.

Stimulation:

The Collision and Harmony of Chinese Arts and French Arts

The plastic arts of China have reached a remarkable level in the past hundred years. During this period we learned from international art, while inheriting and developing the traditional art of China. Thanks to a century's unremitting effort, the exchange and communication are enhanced and intensified. Art is developing.

However, no matter what changes have taken place, only those arts and works which show the common concerns of humanity, create visual impact, and exhibit technical features and artistic method, can inhabit the real soul of art. As the irresistible trend of western art

sweeps through contemporary China, people face a mission to build a harmonious artistic world within these different cultures.

Thanks to artists from China and the west, the exhibition "Stimulation: La France Mandarine" provides us with a wonderful chance to look back into the history of the exchange between China and France. With a goal of finding a real and original artistic world, as well as exploring new ways to art, the exhibition on show at China National Museum of Fine Arts presents viewers with a unique phenomenon.

The Past:

The period of inspiration

In order to understand what has influenced Chinese art and how, it is necessary for us to look back, and review the works of some artists, thinkers, critics, politicians and activists, who introduced western civilization to China during 1920s and 1930s.

From China's early contact with the western world thanks to the historic role of the Silk Road, to the earliest missionary activities in the Qing Dynasty, the first collision of Chinese and western art emitted bright sparks, but regretfully had a limited influence: only royalty got to see it. Not until the end of 20th century, when peo-

ple experienced the perdition of their homeland, foreign invasions and the collapse of feudal system, did they clearly realize the coming of western art.

It was in these troubled times that "The period of inspiration" was born. French culture had a great influence on China, especially on a Chinese metropolitan Shanghai.

Shanghai was the center of culture collisions in the 1930s, and was at the time an international metropolis – the fifth largest city in the world. In the early 1930s, western arts and Chinese tradition blended in this city, and generated a new vitality and freshness, which came to be known as "Shanghai Deco".

Furniture, which was made in this era in Shanghai, carried the geometric features of the Art Deco style or the Flowery motif of the Art Nouveau period (circa 1900) together with Chi-

nese motifs specifically made for the Chinese life style. Look at the 18-piece furniture set on show. The bedstand possesses western features with a mirror, which shows the openness and curiosity of Shanghai people, and also has Chinese characteristics with its traditional material of rosewood.

Shanghai ladies, who always placed great emphasis on a smart and up to date appearance, felt it essential to appear perfectly groomed and fashionable. They would rather interpret their customary dress with western influence than wear western style clothing. Hence, the *qipao*, the traditional dress of Chinese women, was dramatically evolved in the 1920's by Shanghai ladies who altered the rigid and unchanging styles, grafting western cut and detailing on to the basic pattern. This changed the traditional 'man-

ner' silhouette of the *qipao* to achieve the fashionable chic, body conscious look inspired by western film stars and fashion magazines.

The present:

imitation versus individuality

At present, French art, with its unique living style and luxurious brands as representatives, has an even greater influence on modern China. The more frequently they come into contact with western movies and magazines, the more Chinese people begin to dream a westernized 'modern' living style. When Pierre Cardin brought luxury French styles to China, the curtain of another round of impact on Chinese art and design was drawn up.

But how has Chinese creativity interpreted French art styles? The answer is often unfortunately "bad copies and imitations". A critical fact is placed in front of Chinese artists: lack of creativity leads to the gradual disappearance of Chinese traditional handicraft, which is accelerated by the rapid development of the economy and the speedy pace of industrialization.

Chinese art has to regain its creativity in order to survive and brace up in the global arena. Some artists, bearing such a responsibility, have begun to attempt new creations. For instance, the artist Luo Xu, was enchanted with the thighs of women with tootsies, and brings to the exhibition his works *Sitting East Venus*, which presents a real but visual space and a world of harmony.

Future:

A new expression

"Awakening: La France Mandarine" is not only a tribute to the past, but also an exhibition to describe the future. More than 60 artists with diverse backgrounds and nationalities contributed with exhibits especially made for the show with Chinese handicraft techniques, most of which are having their debut on the stage.

In the section entitled "Future", artists from near and far join hands to create new methods of expressing cultures and art, and thus to have a better understanding of cultures from other nations. At the same time, they have been trying to probe into and define an artistic style comprising the differences in art and culture. Hopefully, they will be able to create a new world of visual language, which has rich contents and unlimited creativity.

Photos by Tian Yufeng

By Gareth George

Zhang Dali talks about change, his painting process and having his work mistaken for fraudulent advertising.

"My art is practical," says Zhang Dali in his soft relaxed manner. "It's modern, but it's about common people. I express my views through my work, so I want people to be able to understand it. Simplicity is important." In his jeans and work shirt, a utilitarian crew cut framing a thoughtful, unexpressive face, "practical" is a word that hangs well on Zhang. He looks like a reliable sound engineer – a man behind the scenes, rather than a spokesperson for a city's forgotten heritage. He works in a studio "by a migrant community on the 5th ring road: for the space it affords me, as well as proximity to my subjects." Can this be the same man – the darling of European art shows, married to a sophisticated Italian beauty? If Zhang Dali lacks glamour, his substance and passion balances the scales.

Zhang Dali is not anti modernization. But he believes change is not necessarily a good in itself. While modern Beijing, and the change that is an extension of the city's momentum has been good for many, Zhang's art forces spectators to consider those the city is leaving behind: the displaced hutong dwellers and, most famously, the migrants. The motif "AK-47" has become a trademark of Zhang Dali's work. The ubiquitous Russian assault rifle is known for being tough and rugged. Like the migrants themselves, the rifle seems to turn up wherever life is brutal and survival the overriding priority. Over tea, Zhang explains the process of creating his monochrome paintings. "I don't use tra-

ditional cloth like canvas. I use materials that are cheap and easy to get hold of – like vinyl. You can get it in large quantities because it's an industrial by product. I think it's more representative of the speed and environment of modern life here in Beijing. And it's Beijing that my work is concerned with."

Zhang clasps his hands as he speaks, his fingers are slender and pink and unmarked, like a pianist's. "And vinyl can be washed if it gets dirty. Practical."

While the actual method of creating his paintings is a secret, Zhang basically selects a picture of a face, then expands it to fit the surface of the vinyl. "Then I select a palette of 12 to 13 colors, and paint the colors - lightest to darkest - onto the black back cloth behind the vinyl." Up close, one sees the motif AK-47 repeated over and over. At a distance, a human face is visible, staring blankly from the matrix of letters and numbers.

Zhang moved to his 5th ring road studio to be close to subjects for *100 Chinese*, a series of sculptures taken from casts of the heads of migrant workers. He's now been there five years. There were a lot of positives initially. He could afford a large space for creating his life sized sculptures. But his time there has altered him. "The migrants are a symptom of the changes in Beijing. There are lots of changes to be faced, and we must face change. It's easy to forget we have certain rights and we don't always respect these rights." It's hard to imagine

A City's Conscience



the lives of these people, who lack even a voice. Zhang continues: "There are people there who are struggling to eat, struggling to make a dwelling they can live in, struggling with unfair treatment. Actually, these are all elements of the same thing. As the city changes, some benefit and others do not. They don't have the right to a voice here – they are not official residents. And while they can find work, many are drowning in bureaucracy. They need many papers, including temporary living certificates. And we must remember that these are not educated people."

Zhang's art also speaks about the native Beijingers forced to leave their homes. They are relocated for their own benefit, but many don't want to leave.

The problem is there are no rules to protect these people, or they are not sufficiently educated to know who to speak to. Zhang addresses the confusion: "This change: What is it? Who benefits? If people don't want to leave their traditional neighborhoods, shouldn't they be able to choose? If the move is forced, it benefits the city – the profits go to the businessmen. Building tower blocks and offices doesn't benefit the people – a pleasant environment does." Zhang wants to know who is protecting Beijing's heritage. "Unlike abroad, property rights here are not owned by individuals. Actually the whole system is quite confusing, so it's very difficult to know who is responsible for the protection of these communities. Maybe in 30 years,

the real Beijing will be gone forever."

Talking of the environment, several of Zhang's famous AK-47 graffiti pictures decorate the cold concrete walls of the factory spaces at Dashanzi. But recently, the "AK-47" motif has been obscured with buckets of thin, sulphuric yellow paint. Surely he's not becoming disillusioned with his work? Zhang looks bewildered. "It wasn't me," he says. Then he laughs: "They get a lot of telephone numbers stenciled on the walls here. Companies that produce fraudulent university certificates. Maybe they thought I was advertising."

Zhang Dali is mistaken for another corporate rogue? They obviously haven't met him.

Photo provided by Zhang Dali

What's New

By Tom Spearman

CD

Death in Vegas: Milk It



Buying what are supposed to be two-disc albums can be a frustrating experience in Beijing, as you often only get one disc. That's the case with this best-of collection from versatile ambient-electro/dance rock/indie rock outfit Death in Vegas. You won't find the collection of B-sides, rarities and remixes on disc two. What you will get are some scintillating highs, and rather awful lows spanning numerous genres on disc 1. Death started out ambient and blissful with first album *Dead Elvis*, before getting darker and humorously cynical on the superb *Contino Sessions*. For their third album, *Scorpio Rising*, the band went indie, dropping their computers and synthesizers for actual instruments. It wasn't an entirely successful effort, though the best track from that album, *Hands Around My Throat*, is included here. Fans won't need this album, but for those unaware of the charms of Death, *Milk It* is essential listening.

DVD

Deadwood



There's been a bit of a lull recently in the Beijing DVD market for quality TV drama box sets. But some good new offerings are now available, including this award winning drama set in the mining territory of Dakota in 1876, during the gold rush. *Deadwood* is a lawless frontier town that draws profiteers, scum and complex, conflicted types like sinister bar owner Al Swearengen, played by veteran British actor Ian McShane. The series aims to explode some of the myths created by the genre of western movies and reveal a more accurate picture of life. For one thing, they used to have wagon traffic jams in which it gets "tighter than a bull's ass in fly season". For another, there's as much swearing as on an episode of the *Sopranos*, something that John Wayne never would have allowed.

Carnivale



"We can't just leave him." "But we're down to tater shucks." When a travelling carnival comes across hayseed Ben Hawkins burying his mother in dustbowl America, he doesn't seem like promising material. But Ben has special gifts, albeit of a troubling nature. So does preacher Justin Crowe, who believes he's a medium for God's will. The point of all of this? It's a harbinger of the final battle between good and evil, a battle that will take place in "the last great age of magic", also known as depression era America. There's a creature of light and darkness born to every generation, you see, and which side Ben and Justin are on is not immediately clear. But the fact that Justin is played by seasoned bad guy Clancy Brown (remember *Highlander*?) ought to be a clue. This is yet another richly textured, lovingly produced and beautifully written drama series from HBO, and the DVD transfer is superb.



Chasing My Beloved Heart

Photos by Cui Jun

Hong Kong's Oscars Unveiled

By Lou Li

The 24th annual Hong Kong Film Awards were held on Sunday. *Kung Fu Hustle* was named best film while *2046* swept the top acting honors.

Kung Fu Hustle, produced by Hong Kong's kung fu comedian Stephen Chow, captured six top awards at the ceremony, one of the premier events for the Chinese-language film industry, including best film, best supporting actor and best action choreography.

But the city's top box office movie, which is about kung fu masters who battle gangsters in their neighborhood, failed to win best director or best actor for Stephen Chow despite its 16 nominations in 18 available categories, the most ever in the 24-year history of the awards.

In a brief speech Chow thanked his fans, audience and film crew. He also paid tribute to Kung Fu legend Bruce Lee, who was honoured as the "Star of the Century" for his contribution to Chinese cinema in the past 100 years. "He changed the way we looked at kung fu, changed the way we look at movies," Chow said.

Art house director Wong Kar-wai's romance *2046* raced neck-and-neck with *Kung Fu Hustle*, also winning six gongs. Hong Kong heartthrob Tony Leung and mainland star Zhang Ziyi won the lead



Zhang Ziyi and Tony Leung Photo by Imaginechina

acting awards for their roles in *2046* – a follow-up to the Cannes-winning *In the Mood for Love*.

Former Cannes winner Tony Leung, who has won dozens of different film awards before, is widely regarded as being at the peak of his career.

The gangster flick *One Nite in Mongkok*, about a Chinese assassin and a prostitute who cross paths in Hong Kong, was honoured with the best screenplay and best director award going to Derek Yee Tung-sing.

The climax of the ceremony

was when *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* director Ang Lee presented a professional spirit award to Jackie Chan. After accepting the award, Jackie humorously urged his son, Jaycee Chan, who was a losing nominee for best newcomer, to pay his dues and not to "arrive late and leave early."

The ceremony celebrated the centenary of Chinese cinema this year, with clips of some of the best movies from Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan shown throughout the three-hour event.

The presenters, including mainland actress Liu Xiaoqing, directors Feng Xiaogang and Tian Zhuangzhuang, Taiwan model Lin Chi-ling and actress Maggie Cheung, made the ceremony all the more glamorous.

The awards association moved this year's ceremony to the 7,000-seat Hong Kong Coliseum from the 1,000-seat Cultural Centre, aiming to make this year's event the biggest ever.

"What we want to achieve is to make the Hong Kong film workers feel proud of what they have done," Manfred Wong, chairman of the Hong Kong Film Awards Association, remarked.

The awards provided a needed spark of excitement in a local movie industry that is suffering from poor investment, generally falling box-office receipts and rampant intellectual rights piracy.

By Jacqueline Yu

Director Meng Jinghui often portrays two worlds: one is lived and imagined only by a few people with pure and clean hearts, who desperately chase something innocently beautiful; the other is packed with the so called "mass", who are vulgar and practical.

In his new play, *Amber*, Meng follows a character who may be able to move from one world to the other. Gao Yuan (played by Liu Ye), is a Chinese Don Juan, living the empty life of a playboy. Gao sees himself as a "hedonist in the face of death" because he has a heart condition which can only be cured by a transplant. To him, life is a game and arrogance is the only stance he can take.

However, things change after Gao gets the

heart transplant he needs. A few days later he encounters a mysterious and innocently beautiful young woman, Shen Xiaoyou (played by Yuan Quan). It turns out that Gao's new heart came from Shen's former lover, a mathematics professor who died in a car accident, and according to Shen, "an angel".

Shen sought out Gao because her lover told her, "I am alive as long as my heart is still beating." Shen hopes to see if her love can endure, but is then riven by guilt over starting a relationship with Gao the playboy. But Gao seems transformed. He says to Shen, "Because of you, I am afraid of dying."

"Of all my works, this has the most optimistic of endings," playwright Liao Yimei, wife of the director Meng, writes in her "Playwright's notes". This was partly inspired by her pregnancy. "Life is a miracle. Even if it is fragile and ordinary, even if it cannot be explained, it is still a miracle."

Xiaoyou makes Gao Yuan see this miracle, just like I saw the miracle of life sitting in the cradle," she says. To have Yuan Quan representing this miracle chaser was a clever casting choice. So far, no

movie or TV director has been able to make good use of her. They all make this young actress look ordinary. But in this performance, she is the embodiment of innocence.

Liu Ye was a classmate of Yuan, along with Zhang Ziyi at the Central Academy of Drama. Since their graduate performance of *Figaro's Wedding* five years ago, Liu has been acknowledged as one of the most promising young actors in China. His famous films include *Postman in the Mountains* (1998) and *Lan Yu* (2001). However, these parts have mainly been gloomy good boys. Gao Yuan, for Liu, is a new and exciting departure. Despite the character of Gao, it's hard to hate him as played by Liu.

The stage design and lighting are all as sharp as you would expect from a Meng Jinghui production, courtesy of Zhang Wu (set designer), Feng Jiangzhou (multi-media designer), Tan Shaoyuan (lighting designer), Chen Fei (image designer), Chenxu Renren (visual art designer), and Zhao Yan (costume designer).

Amber moves through different moods: exciting, sad, sexy, inspiring. But seeing the beauty of life is the primary emotion. It seems to be working with audiences, as *Amber* has been sold-out on most nights.

Where: Poly Theatre
When: 7:30 pm, till Sunday
Admission: 150-580 yuan
Booking hotline: 8404 9981/2



Photo by Demon.Q

By Wang Yao

At the latest performance of AK47 the band staged some new pieces and some classic ones. On the night, the fans' pogo dancing was even higher and more energetic than usual, giving you an idea of the quality of the performance.

The night was highly anticipated by over 400 fans and they came from all over the country, even as far as Guangxi, to see the band. Some said they had never had a chance to see AK 47 play live before, so they cherished this opportunity.

The performance began at half past nine in the 13Club, and after two supporting bands, AK47 finally came on stage. The fans rushed to the front and shouted with excitement. The band, meanwhile, were calm and cool, wearing uniforms and their orange armbands with the logo "AK 47". The band formed in 2000 and vocalist Lao Mao soon became famous in the rock field. This night, they played many of their old songs such as *47 Hao Gonglu* (*No. 47 Street*), *Chuan*

AK47's Night

Liu Bu Xi (*Flowing*) and *Huang Jin Shi Jian* (*Golden Times*).

The style of the band in fact was hard to tell, because they had characteristics both of industrial metal and electro. They were also influenced by some older metal bands and ambient music also played a vital part in their music production. It's not surprising their music has attracted fans from so many different age groups.

AK47 have clearly grasped the importance of contrast and the combination of modern rock with native national tunes. Many bands just have a heavy sound and think the heavier the music they play, the crazier the fans will be. However, it's easy to tire of that kind of music after hearing it for a while. AK47 try to add a little more to the mix. They used a sampling machine to simulate mysterious and odd sounds such as echoes and waterfalls. The drum sound was another highlight of the performance. It was sometimes like a machine counting down, keeping the beats slow. Though the drum sound in a live performance can sometimes sound a little weak, the AK47 drummer was good and powerful.

Professional Certificates Launched for Advertising Sector

By Xie Xiaolin

Advertising certificates in four categories are to be launched in May by the China Advertising Association (CAA), according to Su Hua, from the CAA's professional training department. As one of the hottest careers at present, the certificates in

advertising will cover design, copywriting, art design and film-making, with three levels, from basic to senior. National exams will be carried out once or twice a year.

It is estimated that there were about 1 million advertising employees in China in 2004. The industry enjoys a steady increase in employment numbers each

year, as does the business turnover, which is growing at an annual rate of 10 percent, Su told *Beijing Today*.

China saw a 90 percent boom in business profits in the industry from 1992 to 1994, and an average growth of 30 percent annually for the past 10 years. This growth has led to a situation where many small



A billboard soliciting advertisers in Jinjiang, Fujian has annoyed locals with its provocative imagery and ambiguous slogan, "An ideal spot." China Advertising Association (CAA), the watchdog of national advertising industry, is set to regulate and promote the quality of the industry.

Photo by Xie Xiangming

advertising companies are scattered throughout the country, competing fiercely with one another. The introduction of the new certificates is expected to upgrade the advertising indus-

try toward an intensive and technical development. Meanwhile the CAA is promoting self-regulation in the industry to counter such problems as fake advertisements.

Expats at Work:



Joann and her assistant Jamie Bosley, with their newly-created puppet decoration for The King Stag. Photo by Xie Xiaolin

Puppetry in Beijing

By Xie Xiaolin

Professor Joann Siegrist is busy at Beijing University with the design and production of the puppet show *The King Stag*, to be staged this May.

As a professor of puppetry and creative dramatics at the University of West Virginia, she enjoys puppetry design and child education.

Siegrist says she has learnt a lot from Chinese shadow puppets, a traditional folk art in northern China.

Q: What is your opinion of the Chinese puppetry major at universities?

A: Actually, though China enjoys a long history of puppetry, I found only a few universities offer drama majors in some art institutes, let alone a puppetry major. The students involved in *The King Stag* are mainly performance, design or English majors who are interested in puppetry. But they impressed me most with their enthusiasm, intelligence and creativity. I hope we could develop some sort of exchanges between countries in order to promote cultural and educational communications.

Q: How do you regard puppetry and Chinese shadow puppetry?

A: From my 30 years of professional experience in puppetry, I think it has in part originated in China – first the shadow puppetry, then from shadows to artificial designs with wood or such materials. It gives illusions and seems real or alive, to entertain or educate.

We went to shops and malls in Beijing to find all the necessary materials for *The King Stag* and have built the puppets with the help of students here.

Like the small man-made dragon I bought in Xi'an, people manipulate those created animals or characters in every walk of life. I'm often moved to tears when children gained and laughed from my work. The meaningful aspect of my career lies in the achievements which still encourage me till today and forever. Beijing University also provided me with the golden opportunity to do some research on shadow puppets, which will be an exclusive chapter in my new book *Great Puppetry, Heroes and Heroines of the world*.

Q: How about the scholarships for international students?

A: Besides my teaching at WVU and consulting or social work in some universities, I'm a former president of the board of directors of UNIMA-USA (the international puppetry organization), and of the UNIMA Scholarship Committee, which fosters puppetry abroad. I have conducted numerous workshops on creative drama and puppetry production. I'm willing to help those students who have a dream of becoming a puppeteer. They may contact me via email or phone. I'll recommend excellent candidates with language level certificates, application and CV to those selection committees.

Q: What is your plan concerning Disney Land?

A: Disney Land is to open a branch in Hong Kong. I'm planning to recommend my students and Chinese students who might devote themselves to puppetry as career consider working there. I'm excited to experience the change of season here, like the birds' singing and water flowing; I hope the spring of international puppetry is coming soon. And years later, I want to launch my own workshops in China to develop puppetry with young people here.

Calling All Cartoonists

By Xie Lixue

Animated pictures are not only for the amusement of little children. More and more adults are plunging into the world of cartoons, not only for entertainment, but also for earning a living. From their point of view, interest, creation and potential of development are the motivation for them to work like kids.

A report by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security shows that the number of domestic professionals in this field has reached 10,000, half that of South Korea, and the production time reached 29,000 minutes, excluding those for foreign markets, one-quarter of that of Japan. Last December, the ministry named animation a "new career."

Animators play different roles, including creating the drafts, designing the scripts, making character models, adding facial expressions and movements, and finally combining those into motion pictures, in accordance with the plot.

"Every step involves different ca-

pabilities," said Shi Yue, the designer of Beijing HeavenStone Studio, a cartoon-making workshop.

"For instance, creating the models of different scenes and characters requires a great sense of color, structure and art. However, when starting the combining and editing periods, knowledge of computer technology is a must for the final products, especially, in the modern three-D age," Shi explained.

Facing the enthusiasm of young people to join the domestic cartoon sector, more than twenty universities and colleges have newly set up animation courses.

In addition, specialist training schools, such as Huayu Tiandi Cartoon College, targeting animated cartoons, have increased in popularity.

However, basic artistic ability is still the key in the creation process, Mr. Dong of Miaoyin Cartoon Company told *Beijing Today*.

"Computer technology, resources of original creation and management ability are the main directions in current teaching, but they somewhat neglect the foundation of producing the best cartoon works – the hand-drawing skills."

He also introduced that as middle level painters skilled in hand drawing, their monthly salary would reach 3,000 yuan, and even 6,000 with computer design ability.



Robots, the hottest cartoon film screening in the US is coming to China.

Though traditional cartoon production methods are still held in high regard here, the old ways cannot compete with the new digital tools available to animators.

Photo by Photocom

Graduates Name Top 50 Preferred Companies

By Xie Lixue

IT and telecommunications are the most attractive sectors for young Chinese students, according to a survey by *China University Students Career Guide*, a magazine providing job-hunting information published by the Ministry of Education.

The survey named 50 companies, both domestic and transnational, preferred by young people. Finance and insurance, commodities, mass media and manufacturing also rate highly on the top list.

Compared with a similar survey conducted in 2001, the current generation on

campus are more rational when choosing jobs. Companies' development potential, promotion opportunities, fame, scale and welfare are seen as the most important factors, followed by employment training, bonus policies, values, corporate culture and leadership.

While international brands have decreased somewhat in popularity, famous domestic enterprises have raised their profile. Over half of the top 50 are Chinese companies, including the top rated Haier Group, a household electrical appliance manufacturer; China Mobile Communications Corporations at number five,

and Lenovo Group Limited, the largest IT company in China, at number six.

Questions on desired locations and salary levels were also included in the survey. Shanghai, Beijing, East China, Guangzhou, Shenzhen were illustrated as the most popular work places and the students' average expectation for salary was 2,390 yuan, 100 yuan higher than in 2001.

The top ten companies were Haier, Procter & Gamble, Microsoft, IBM, China Mobile, Lenovo, Huawei Technologies, General Electric, Siemens and China Telecom.

Mental Health Requires Care

By Xie Lixue

According to the World Psychiatric Association, 5 percent of people in China have suffered psychological disturbance and 13 percent have suffered from mental illness.

The statistics, compiled by the Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center since the 1980's, also reveal that more than 2,000 entrepreneurs have committed suicide during that period.

In a questionnaire organized by CBP Career Consultants, 68 percent of white collars said they had experienced anxiety about their work, especially in the fields of IT, finance and security, medicine and advertising.

EAPs Consulting also performed a survey of over 2,000 employees in the IT sector, which found that about 20 percent felt heavily pressured, 5 percent felt overwhelmed by mental prob-

lems and 75 percent said they needed psychological help.

Poor mental health has become a significant threat to the development of the society, not only in terms of the illness itself, but also for the loss it causes in human resources. Consequently, mental health care in the work place has become an important priority for governments, companies and social communities.

Seeking Employment

A lady specializing in international trade is looking for management positions in customer service, program planning, project studying and implementing.

Tel: 010-83835570 or 81842991
Email: Redbirdzhao@2911.net

A swimming coach from Moldova is looking for a job in Beijing. Qualifications as: Coach/Judge at National Standard; Olympian (Ranked 12th in the world in 1995), World Cup Silver Medallist; Experienced children's coach at all levels; Qualified driver (B, C, D, E categories), bodybuilding instructor; Proficient in Russian, English, Romanian, Ukrainian.

Contact Max Cazmirciuc at: 13126711168 or email: mcazmirciuc@yahoo.com

Web design graduates are available. For details visit: www.inhb.com, or call Liu or Tang at: 0311-3160000. Email: luogq@heinfo.net

Female Beijinger, 39, has a decade's experience in import-export business, human resources management, interpretation and secretarial work. I have a good command of computer skills and am good at English, both writing and speaking. Mobile: 13611163663

Situations Vacant

A US personal care products and nutrition food company is looking for market developers in eastern China. Professional training and full welfare treatment are available. Contact Mr. Wu at 021-2847 5874, email: boz_mr@163.com, QQ: 115016138

Shangqiu Fuyuan Ruibo Bio-engineering Co. in Henan Province is looking for marketing professionals, fine chemical professionals, chemical analyzers, IT software and network developers, pharmaceutical professionals and nutrition analyzers.

Tel: 0370-2268636, 13781596019, Email: renliziyuan@fyrb.com.cn

Shanghai Whyte Asia Pioneer Pharma is looking for instrumentation and automation engineers, chemical engineers, R&D managers, chemists, microbiologists, chemical analysts, process development chemists, chemical products sourcing executives, and web masters. Contact: Mr. Zhou at: 021-6120 3156

The Southern Industrial Zone, Bincheng District, Binzhou, Shandong Province, is looking for two reps and five consultants in Beijing. Contact: Mr. Chen at 13561569235

(You are welcome to send positions offered and wanted info freely to: ayi@ynet.com. Beijing Today does not take any responsibility for the accuracy and authenticity of the information published in this column.)

A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

Chinese applicants should have university degrees in English or related majors and media experience.

Foreigners from the UK and US with relevant media experience preferred.

Please send your resumes and writing samples to: hr@ynet.com

The number of Chinese students heading abroad for education at their own expense peaked in 2002, and then fell by around 10,000 a year in 2003 and 2004. For several reasons, the study abroad market is clearly slowing down, spelling trouble and increased competition for the domes-

tic study abroad agency industry.

Hou Shijun, director and chairman of study abroad agent Ziming Culture & Communication shared his opinions about the state of the agency market in an interview with *Beijing Today* on Monday.

Agencies Must Specialize to Survive



An agent talks to a student considering heading abroad at an education exhibition earlier this month in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. Competition is becoming cut-throat in the domestic study abroad agency market, forcing companies to find niches and develop their services to stay in the game.

Photo by DD

By Jackie Zhang
Market uncertainty:

BT: What do you think of the current state of competition in the domestic study abroad agency market?

Hou Shijun: The fierce competition should be attributed to the irregular structure of the industry, in my opinion.

First, the number of qualified study abroad agencies is large. And not only agencies are competing in the market, many other enterprises are also taking part in the fierce competition by starting study abroad services. For example, many foreign universities have established offices in China and foreign language training schools and joint venture schools have begun to provide students with services to help them go abroad to study. The increasing popularity of the Internet has also made it easier for people to get useful and accurate information online.

These have all become obstacles for agencies in expanding and continuing their businesses and development.

BT: Can you give us your view of the overall market?

Hou: As I said, competition is fierce. The unbalanced industry structure and the popularity of getting information online means that qualified study abroad agencies have to find other ways to survive.

These days, most of the Chinese students heading abroad to study are university graduates. They have good command of English and can handle most of the procedures and processes involved in going abroad. That means study abroad agencies have little to offer them.

BT: What do you think are the big problems holding back the development of the agency market itself?

Hou: There are two major uncertain factors blocking the market's development.

First is safety deposits. Many foreign universities, like those in Australia,

Canada and the UK, require students to pay deposits, usually between 10,000 to 50,000 yuan, before they can get an acceptance offer. Universities require those deposits to ensure that students will definitely go to study, and not for other purposes, and for their own protection. But students that are not given visas after being accepted to foreign universities can have a hard time getting their deposits back.

Second, visas are crucial for students, and getting one can be very difficult. Foreign visa officers always say they welcome all qualified students to go to their countries to study. The question then is how do they determine if a student is qualified? The fact is that not all qualified students can get visas.

Since there are more and more competitors entering the market, including university offices and language training schools, and more people are getting information themselves through the Internet, agencies must start new services to distinguish themselves from others in order to survive.

BT: Are there any ways to solve those two problems?

Hou: Yes. Hopefully, these two problems can be solved within this year.

With the support of the Ministry of Education and cooperation from the Bank of China, a new system called the Students Overseas Tuition Fee Payment Security System, meant to protect students from financial losses, is being set up. The Bank of Chi-

na is the only domestic bank with branches all over the world. Therefore, Chinese students at universities in any country could use this system to pay their deposits and tuition fees through savings accounts at the Bank of China. Once students get visas, the bank will transfer their payments to universities' accounts. Of course, the bank will return the money to students who do not get visas. This should help hedge students' financial risks.

At present, the system covers a list of recognized foreign universities, including about 10,000 universities and schools, which can be found at the Web site www.jsj.edu.cn. We intend to invite at least around 1,000 universities from around the world to take part in the system so students can open China branches



Hou Shijun, director of Ziming Culture & Communication, one of the top agencies in Beijing

Photo by Zhang Nan

accounts in Bank of China branches in those countries.

Regarding the visa problem, we plan to establish a system called the Students Visa Application Trust System. I have already handed in a plan and report for this new system to the Ministry of Education. Hopefully, we will start discussions with visa officers from different embassies later this year. This system is meant to guarantee that qualified students can get visas smoothly and go abroad to study.

Entrance of foreign capital:

BT: Do you think the Chinese study abroad agency market will

open to foreign capital?

Hou: From July 2004, the Administrative Licensing Law was put into practice. The study abroad industry is defined as a licensed industry, meaning it is protected by law, and therefore foreign companies, universities or joint ventures will not be allowed to enter the industry in the short term.

Agency Industry Association:

BT: What role will the Agency Industry Association play in both the work of the government and the development of the agency market?

Hou: The association has not started work yet. At this stage, it is still putting together necessary funding.

I think the association should help the work of the government. The establishment of the association also allows agencies to work together in the group's name, while in the past, agencies' activities were led by the government. Now, members of the association often sit together to discuss important issues. This is good for the development of the market.

Advice to students:

BT: Based on your own experiences abroad, do you have any suggestions for Chinese students overseas?

Hou: I recommend students abroad come back China after they finish their studies.

If students intend to start their own businesses, China has a better environment than most foreign countries. China's entry into the World Trade Organization has opened lots of room for young entrepreneurs to develop.

If students want to find corporate jobs, especially at foreign companies and joint ventures, international study and living experience will be an advantage when they apply for positions.

Students should develop their analytical abilities, but the first thing for them is to complete their studies and get their degrees on time.

Ask Ayi:

Q: Could you please introduce the length of schooling in Germany?

—Saltz

A: In Germany, different kinds of universities and different specialties require different lengths of schooling. Generally speaking, students should study for four to six years to complete their studies.

The school year has two semesters, winter semester and summer semester. However, since there are many required courses and elective courses that students should take and complete, it is possible for students to take another one or two years to complete their studies.

Applied science universities keep their curricula tight. Students need to study for eight to nine semesters and are not allowed to prolong their schooling without special reasons.

A few schools offer bachelor's programs, which run three years. Art colleges usually require students to study for seven to ten semesters.

Q: I am a student at Capital Normal University. I plan to become a teacher, but first want to further my studies abroad after I graduate. I have heard good things about the University of Calgary in Canada. Can you give me an introduction to its education faculty?

—TT

A: The faculty of education at the University of Calgary prepares teachers of children, adolescents, and adults and professionals working with disabled persons in community rehabilitation.

Their innovative teacher-preparation program is centered on case studies. Traditional courses have been replaced with case and field seminars in which students work together to resolve teaching questions. Students also go into schools to assist teachers and to practice teaching. Some students choose the international option and complete studies while living and working abroad. For information about the university's master of teaching program, go to www.educ.ucalgary.ca.

Students in the community rehabilitation and disability studies program seek new and better ways for persons with disabilities to live fulfilling lives.

Courses in community rehabilitation may be taken at U of C or virtually through distance education if the student lives elsewhere.

(Edited by Jackie Zhang)

China Schools Recruit in Malaysia

By Jackie Zhang

Dozens of elite Chinese universities recruited students in Malaysia at the China Higher Education Exhibition in Kuala Lumpur last weekend.

The 46 universities that took part in the event included Tsinghua University, Renmin University, Fudan University, Jinan University and Harbin Institute of Technology. Several universities from Hong Kong and Macao were also involved.

Zhuang Youming, director of the recruiting department at Jinan University told the news Web site chuguo.cn that Malaysian students had language advantages over students from other countries. "Many people in Malaysia have good command of Chinese, English and even Cantonese," Zhang said.

"Many Malaysian students have Chinese backgrounds, making it easier for them to get along with classmates in China. Plus, Chinese education in Malaysia is outstanding and Malaysian students study hard. These are the main reasons why Chinese universities have come to Malaysia to recruit students," he said.

It was the second time the China Higher Education Exhibition was held in Malaysia. The event was organized by the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia.

BACKCOUNTRY GEAR



By Wang Yao

It may sound like it's from backcountry America, but Ozark is actually a brand of outdoor sporting goods made in Switzerland. The mark's clothes, backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, boots and more are of top quality and often remarkable value.

Lots of high-tech materials, like Gore-tex and Windstopper fabrics, are used in the clothing options to keep hikers warm and dry. Shop assistants recommend Ozark's new line of hiking shoes and boots, which also feature waterproof Gore-tex lining as well as air cushioned soles and firm uppers to protect ankles. Soft cotton inside the uppers draws off sweat to prevent blistering, and

the innovative soles have v-shaped strips of sticky rubber to make sure feet stay on the trail.

Sleeping bags come in several styles, from simple, thin bag to arctic-ready models stuffed thick with grey goose down. All are designed to be light and pack tight, making them good choices for an easy camping weekend or a serious expedition.

Ozark tents are mostly two-person models, some of which also use Gore-tex to keep occupants dry even in heavy rain. The bomb-proof walls of the tents are designed to allow air circulation while providing privacy. These too can be folded neat and packed away for easy stowage.

Where: 3123-3124 Jinyuan Shopping Mall, No.1 Yuandadu Haidian
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm Tel:8887 8717

Precious Stones

By Wang Yao

The Junoesque mark is a brand created by jewelry manufacturers YM of the US and Congeries of China and aimed at the tastes of Chinese buyers.

Junoesque jade pieces are designed to match the figures, skin color and cultural background of Chinese customers while integrating some Western elements. All stones used are imported from Burma.

Pieces in the Emerald's Spring series include an intriguing bracelet, a wearable cluster of 18 smooth jade balls in the three hues of milky yellow, green and blue.

For a more classic look, check the collection of pieces made of black agate and lustrous pearls. One is the striking "samsara" pendant, which features the contrast of black and white



with the addition of light cyan thanks to some volcanic glass.

Modern young women are likely to want something more colorful, and Junoesque provides. Its Dream of the Sea necklace features dark blue matched with light blue and yellow. Some of the bright stones are carved into various shapes like hearts, waves, trumpets and fish, and it is all strung together with thin, quality silver or platinum chain.

Where: 2006k Jinyuan Shopping Mall
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm



Photos by Li Shuzhuan

By Wang Yao

The German Shop is a showcase of prime German products, featuring furniture, jewelry and decorations from 11 top German brands, including Niessing, Coeur De Lion, London, Carl Dau, Kahla and Mono.

Jewelry buffs will dazzle over the selection of pieces from makers Coeur De Lion and London. London products, created by top jewelry designer Carl Dau, particularly stand out with their fresh, modern aesthetics.

Leonardo brand glassware features comfortable shapes and pure, evocative colors, turning ordinary cups, bottles and even ashtrays into collectible objects d'arts.

Foodies who appreciate fine culinary products should check out the range of items from the Kahla brand. Its graceful, creative products are functional yet attractive enough to be used simply as decorations.

Where: 3018-3023 Jinyuan Shopping Mall
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm Tel: 8887 4190

Build-an-Image

By Wang Yao

The Image-Building Center on the third floor of the Jinyuan mall is the newest creation of famed Chinese personal stylist Jimi, who worked to open the business with the Jixinyuan Beauty Center.

This elite salon hires only experienced beauticians, hairdressers and image consultants, many of whom have won awards in their fields or been involved in the make-up for major Chinese films.

The center's avowed purpose is to help people show their individuality. Popular hair and make-up

styles are refined for each customer, and the service does not stop there. Center staff can also walk customers through individually-tailored plans for how to dress, use make-up and take care of their skin and bodies.

The key to this personal service is the business' information and consulting center. There, guests can ask questions about style and enter information into the center's records, to keep track of changes in their complexions and styles.

All products used and sold are from Jimi's own line or from top

German brands.

Among the Image-Building Center's popular services is hand-waxing, not intended to remove hair but to improve circulation and therefore improve skin softness. In the treatment, wax is heated and mixed with secret skin treatments, then mopped over hands. Effects can last up to two months, and after three treatments, tired hands will look noticeably softer and younger.

Where: 3036 Jinyuan Shopping Mall
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm Tel: 8887 5559



Pet Penthouse

By Wang Yao

There are three pet shops on the fourth floor of the Jinyuan Mall in Haidian, but only the Haiwei International Pet Center provides professional pet care services along with toys, food and other items for animal friends.

Because the massive shopping center allowed customers to bring their pets with them, shoppers could stash their pets with the store's caring staff while checking out other shops, the manager told *Beijing Today*. The store offers premium bathing, grooming and health inspection services.

Of course, the Pet Center also sells animals to take home, including a fat, lazy cat with soft striped fur that remarkably resembles the cartoon character Garfield. Other feline selections include Scotland Fold kittens, which have folded ears, and little Turkish Angoras, all certified pure breeds.

Exotic dogs are available as well. Arguably the most striking is an Italian greyhound, which you can watch pacing around the store's sizeable playground. Originally bred for hunting, greyhounds are born racers, so potential buyers should be sure they have sufficient space to keep pace with this kind of pooch.

The store's aquarium is home to a rare Malayan Bonytongue. These finicky fish are great to watch, but very tough to care for, meaning it is a job best suited to serious aquarium keepers.

Where: 4145 Jinyuan Shopping Mall
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm

Kiddymart

By Wang Yao

Infants, toddlers and pregnant moms are the target customers of the Peek-A-Boo store, which offers a wide range of clothes, beds, carriages, cradles and toys, mostly in soft shades of light yellow, khaki and coffee to care for little ones' sensitive eyes.

Baby clothes come in different materials, including pure gauze, which offers optimum softness and sweat-drawing capacity while also being able to get rid of any funky baby odors.

Anti-bacterial outfits are made of a melding of cotton and silk treated with natural anti-bacterial materials that can kill bacteria on children's skin, and therefore ward off infections.

When such high technology is not needed, Rainbow Cotton series clothes should fit the bill. These wee garments are made of light colored cotton mixed with wool and other natural fibers so they are warm, soft, not itchy and durable.

Kiddy beds come in many shapes and sizes, from raised cribs to an activity bed for slightly older children. It has a mattress of thick foam to protect kids' bones, surrounded by soft walls about a meter high. Children can bounce around on the bed or crash out on in safety when tired.

Where: 4145b Jinyuan Shopping Mall
Open: 9:30 am - 9 pm Tel: 8887 5941



Activities

BJ Hikers – Tiger Valley

This week's hike starts from a small tomb among the 13 Ming Tombs that was built for one of the wives of the emperor. From a village at the foot of a hill we will follow a mountain trail up to a pass.

Where: Changping County, north of Beijing **When:** Sunday, leave at 8:30 am from the Lido Hotel outside of Starbucks **Cost:** 150 yuan for adults, 100 yuan for children under 12 **Tel:** 13910025516 (Reservations essential)

Chinese Culture Club (CCC)

Illustrated Talk: China Obscura

Mark Leong will show and discuss a selection of images from his recent book *China Obscura*, a collection of black-and-white works that offers a somewhat gritty view of this country over the past 15 years. Mark Leong is a Chinese-American documentary photographer whose pictures have appeared in *Time*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

Where: Chinese Culture Club, 29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** April 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6432 9341

Exhibitions

Viewing Space by Shi Zhongying

Three-dimensional works by Shi Zhongying, one of the Red Gate Gallery's featured artists. Shi is now a teacher at the Hebei School of Fine Arts and has shown abroad in Spain, Great Britain and Italy.

Where: Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwen **When:** until April 17, daily 10 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6525 1005

New Female Vision – Contemporary Artists

The newly-opened Proposal Art Center will present a special art exhibition with works created solely by women artists to reveal the different angles of modern women. A total of 16 women artists will take part in the exhibition and show their latest art creations based on the special way they see the world.

Where: Proposal Art Center, 6 Beishihuan Donglu, Chaoyang **When:** until April 30, daily 10 am – 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 13911166261



Cao Fei COSplayers

Bold creations by artist Cao Fei focusing on the popular trend of COSplay among young people in China are on show at the Courtyard Gallery. COSplay refers to the practice of wearing costumes and makeup of characters from computer games. Combining art with the latest trend, Cao presents striking creations mirroring the life of young people in today's China.

Where: Courtyard Gallery, 95 Donghuamen Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** until April 22, daily 10 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6526 8882

Trouble Hunting – Oils by Yi Ling and Ku Xueming

These two painters, veteran artists from Yuanmingyuan Artists Village, an important site in China's modern art scene, will exhibit a renewed style marked by their persevering pursuit throughout the ups and downs of art reforms over past years. Their paintings deliver a special calmness and poetic language illustrated by the combination of unique symbols.

Where: New Millennium Gallery, Diyang Building, 2



UK's Miniscule of Sound

Jams

Marco V.

Now ranking as the world's number 15 DJ, Marco V brings his telepathic crowd reading ability to Banana. How will he toy with the psyches of this dance hungry crowd? You'll have to go to find out. Support by DJ Spark from HK.

Where: Banana Club, **When:** tonight, 10 pm **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 6528 3636

The British Council once again offers something never before seen in China - the smallest nightclub in the world – Miniscule of Sound. Together with local partner the Beijing Friendship Association, the British Council is pleased to present the unique style of British clubbing through this dynamic production.

Where: Lotus Street, Shishahai, Xicheng **When:** today to Sunday **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6590 6903

Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** April 2-28, daily 9 am – 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 6193

Sport

China Baseball League Kicks Off

The China Baseball League (CBL) kicks off its 2005 season, which will last for three months, in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu. The league has expanded from four team to six – the Beijing Tigers, Tianjin Lions, Guangdong Leopards, Shanghai Eagles, Sichuan Dragons and Hope Stars. Teams are now allowed to recruit foreign players, meaning athletes from Japan, South Korea and the Dominican Republic will be taking the field. Some 30 games will be broadcast live on TV stations in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangdong and Sichuan.



Movies

The Mount of the Spirits

Directed by Miguel Zacarias, starring Jorge Negrete, Maria Felix and Rene Cardona. A story of impossible love between young people from two antagonistic families. This movie is like *Romeo and Juliet* adapted for the Mexican countryside. It marked the first time Mexican movie star Jorge Negrete appeared with his long-time screen partner, Maria Felix, and was a smash success in its time.

Where: Mexican Embassy, 5 Sanlitun Dongjie, Chaoyang **When:** April 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2244



Taxi

Directed by Tim Story, starring Queen Latifah, Jimmy Fallon and Ann-Margret. This is the story of a single mother

and pizza deliverer, Belle, who decides to use her record for making speedy deliveries to another use as a cabbie. As she quickly becomes famous for racing through the city at speeds upwards of 135 mph, a young eager cop who lacks Belle's driving abilities convinces her to help him catch a gang of beautiful female bank robbers.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian



When: from April 1 **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 8211 5566

A Journey Called Love

Directed by Michele Placido, starring Laura Morante, Stefano Accorsi and Katy Louise Saunders. This film recounts the lives and scandalous love affair of two famous Italian writers in the early 20th century, Sibilla Aleramo and Dino Campana.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2

Dong'erjie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang **When:** March 31, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

Performances

Musical Drama: Casablanca

This show is a major part of the Beijing Third International Drama Season. *Casablanca's* timeless love story, its spirit of the pursuit of freedom and trust, and the wonderful performances of its actors and actress have made it an evergreen classic.

Where: Great Hall of the People **When:** April 8-10, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,280 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7845

Service

Fool around at Eudora Station

Do you know that a fool is a desert made with pureed fruit and cream? Try our fools in delightful flavours of dragonfruit and kiwi this April Fool's.

Where: Eudora Station, 9 Fangyuan Xilu, Opposite Beijing Lido Hotel, Chaoyang **When:** today to Sunday **Tel:** 5120 5566

Dine and Wine

From April 1, Atrium Cafe will start its Spring buffet line with a completely new line-up of daily changing menus.

For only 198 yuan, you can enjoy a lavish buffet spread with a free flow of soft drinks, local beers and wines. All prices are subject to 15 percent surcharge.

Where: Atrium Cafe, Hilton Beijing, Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang **Tel:** 5865 5020.

Personal Classifieds

Accommodation

Villa for rent. For details, please contact: 6433 5136, Miss Wong

Sales and Wanted

I need a second-hand travel bag, preferably made in Germany or UK, above 35 L. Also need other stuff for outside travel. Contact: grace_mzy@yahoo.com.cn.

Antique rugs from Ningxia and Tibet for sale. Contact: bchtai@sohu.com

Professional Help

Kang Juan, a girl graduate from Beijing University of Chemical Technology, wants to find a position in the bioengineering field. She has a bachelor's degree in bioengineering. Contact: blueangel1500@sina.com.cn, 13810571418

Zhao Jie, now working at HK PCCW Co. Beijing Branch as a translator, is looking for a position in customer service. She is familiar with Call Center and CRM System Structure and its development direction with secretary experience at Beijing TV Station and technical support at the Founder Computer Customer Service Center. Contact: 83835570, email: Redbirdzhao@2911.net

Kevin Liu, with a bachelor's degree in Economic Law and a certificate for lawyer's qualification, wants to find a job in related fields. Contact: 13718691689, email: lkchn@sina.com.cn

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TV and Radio Highlights

HBO	
1 Friday	
Dragonheart	9 pm
2 Saturday	
Back in Action	9 pm
3 Sunday	
The Craft	8 pm
4 Monday	
The Final Curtain	9:30 pm
5 Tuesday	
Quick Change	9:20 pm
6 Wednesday	
Blankman	9:55 pm
7 Thursday	
The Spitfire Grill	9:30 pm
CCTV-9	
Monday – Friday	
Around China	6:30 am
Culture Express	8:30 am
Nature and Science / Chinese Civilization	11:30 am
Culture Express	2:30 pm
Nature and Science / Chinese Civilization	5:30 pm
Dialogue	7:30 pm
News Updates / Asia Today	8 pm
Sports Scene	11:15 pm
Saturday	
Travelogue	9:30 am
Center Stage	11:30 am
Sunday	
Sports Weekend	10 am
Documentary	10:30 am
This Week	12:30 am
China Radio International 91.5 FM	
Monday – Friday	
Easy FM Afternoon	2-7 pm
Fun in Beijing	5-5:30 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Saturday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Euro Hit 40	12:05-1 pm
Musique Sans Frontières	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Sunday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Jazz Beat	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm

We are glad to receive your feedback. We will print employment, language-exchange and accommodation information for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo@ynet.com or call 6590 2518

By Zhang Jianzhong

A Winter Miracle in Lijiang

Snow in the town of eternal spring

"The rain fell steadily throughout the night. Many streams in Lijiang, Yunnan, progressed from murmuring to chattering, even shouting at times. The combined effect was delightfully soothing, the equivalent of aromatherapy for the ears.

"By early morning the downpour had scoured and polished the granite paving stones. The streets of the little town were still gleaming as tiny pellets of hail began to fall. It landed on cold surfaces, where it rested like marble chips. By late morning the snow took over, fluttering like feathers, settling in a steadily thickening, quilted layer. Soon every leaf and every roof tile was outlined in white, slowly but surely reinventing Lijiang. A man passed by, huddled under a big black umbrella that had accumulated its own snowy outer layer. Otherwise the street was deserted.

"So this was why the orchids lining the main street were covered in straw blankets a couple of nights ago. And the following morning the delicate plants were replaced by the much harder potted Rhododendrons. The forecasters must have given advance notice of the cold front with its attendant snow.

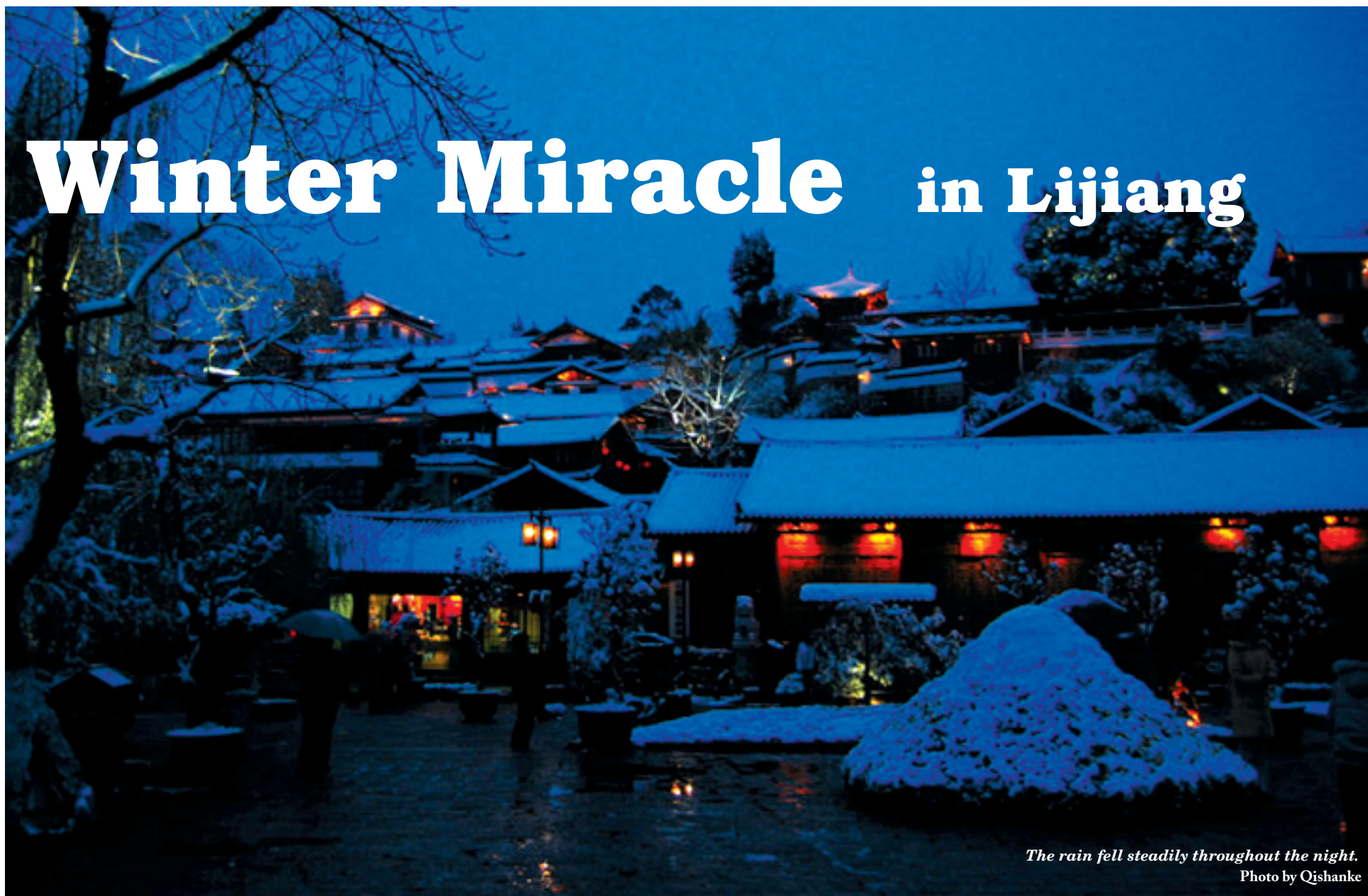
"Only a few individual travelers remained in Lijiang to enjoy the rare sight. The old tour groups must have left early and there were no flights or buses to bring in the new batches. For once, the locals had their town pretty much to themselves."

Fun in the snow

"The tablecloths were stored inside and the tables and seats were covered to protect them from the elements. The waiters and waitresses from the small cafes on either side turned the pretty stream into a battleground-cum sculpture gallery. Everyone joined in the fun as snowballs went flying across the water. A few artistic types worked away at their snowmen or more elaborate figures – an elephant and a bird were acknowledged as the best of the day. Soon there was a shortage of material to serve as ammunition and artistic material. Ingenious participants climbed onto roofs to be able to scoop fallen snow into bowls.

Bottle tops and small chillies were transformed into buttons, mouths and noses, while abandoned hats and other items of clothing were pressed into service. Charcoal was made good for eyebrows, while small pebbles served as eyes. A jaunty red rose adorned the top buttonhole of a snowman, while his female companion gripped a red rose between her teeth in a very alluring way.

"No wonder the locals are enjoying the snow so much! The last time it snowed here was 12 years ago, for no more than two hours. They haven't seen quantities of snow like this in Lijiang since about 1980, so says one of the elders watching the fun and frolicking with a broad grin on his face."



The rain fell steadily throughout the night.
Photo by Qishanke

By Jane Ram
Keeping warm

As the city of eternal spring, Lijiang rarely needs central heating. The sun soon warms the place by day, when temperatures average around 20 throughout the winter. Overnight, however, it cools down fast and even the smallest and simplest guesthouse supplies electric under-blankets as well as thick quilts to keep guests happy. But in such freak weather conditions, unless you want to stay in bed all day, the only solution is to wrap up as warmly as possible and find a fireside seat in a café. This is not as simple as it sounds – such seats are few and competition is polite but nevertheless fierce for draught-free places, where you have a chance to warm up before the smoke turns you into a kipper. It's best to check the direction of the wind before you pick your seat. Be wary if you sit too close to the fire: wet wood and charcoal will spit as it burns and sparks can be dangerous, especially if they land on synthetic clothing.

Lijiang's fireplaces are a study in themselves. Traditionally the locals rely on a big metal pot or a flat stone with a hollow chipped out of its center. Glowing charcoal is placed inside, sometimes with a few pieces of wood for good measure. Your skin, hair, clothes and everything you carry will smell deliciously smoked after a few days in Lijiang. Open your camera to change the battery weeks after you return home and the unmistakable aroma of burning wood and charcoal will come back to remind you of this wonderful place. Youngsters have discovered that small hot water bottles can be filled with a cupful of water and will stay warm for a few hours to provide comfort for frozen fingers.

Lijiang's twin towns

The New Town of Lijiang is a grimy collection of undistin-



A few artistic types worked away.

Photo by Rendian

Bottle tops and small chillies were transformed into buttons, mouths and noses, while abandoned hats and other items of clothing were pressed into service.

Photo by Rendian



guished modern cement buildings. The real attractions are all in the Old Town, an endlessly fascinating area of single- and two-story houses of carved wood and stone. Visitors tread 200-year-old granite slabs as they explore meandering streets that cross and criss-cross hundreds of tiny bridges over the myriad "beautiful streams" that give the place its name. A visit to Lijiang is like entering a toy town, except that these are real buildings where real people live and work.

The inhabitants call the old section of their town Dayan, literally "ink stone", referring to its shape. Lijiang County is one of the smaller subdivisions of Yunnan Province. It has land borders with Burma, Laos, Vietnam and Sichuan province. Not surprisingly its population is diverse, with only about half of the 1 million inhabitants claiming to be Han. Some 25 of China's ethnic minorities are included in Lijiang's fascinating cultural mosaic, although the Naxi are the most numerous. These colorful people have their own rich heritage, including a pictographic script. Their ancestors were nomads from eastern Tibet, who settled here 1,000 or more years ago.

Naxi women

Naxi women are famously

hard working and also good at business. To this day the men generally stick to domestic chores, caring for children, washing clothes and preparing meals while the women are the family breadwinners. Many Naxi women still wear the traditional embroidered cape over their shoulders. The cape is decorated with seven stars, to remind everyone that Naxi women bear the universe on their shoulders, or perhaps to acknowledge that they work from dawn to dusk. On a more practical level, the cape functions as a baby sling, or is even used to secure a bundle of firewood or other awkward items for easy transport atop the woven basket that is borne on the back.

Ancient staging post

In ancient times Lijiang was a staging post on the route between Southeast Asia and Tibet. In the 1940s, when the Japanese blockaded China's coast, Lijiang had a few years of fame as one of the country's two major trading gateways. Caravans of horses, mules and yaks carried all sorts of merchandise along rough mountain tracks over the mountain passes. At the height of this trade it is estimated that some 8,000 horses and mules, with as many as 20,000 yaks plied these routes. The journey took three months and everything was carefully wrapped in wool mats before being sewn into wet hides, which shrank as they dried, making such firmly wrapped packages that the goods survived intact regardless of how much they might be bumped or battered along the way. Before being wrapped, everything had to be carefully weighed as a horse or mule could carry no more than a 90-pound load, while a yak could manage only 75 pounds.

Once the blockade ended, Lijiang returned to its centuries-old life as a backwater. When it opened in 1995, Lijiang's airport, some 40 minutes away, transformed the "Forgotten Kingdom"

overnight. The place has become immensely popular with domestic travelers, most of whom stay in modern hotels in the New Town. The yak and pony caravans are history, but a few ponies are still used as props for tourist souvenir photographs. Occasionally a brave visitor goes for a short ride through the center of the Old Town, the reins held firmly by the picturesquely outfitted horseman, who clutches a pooper scooper in the other hand, just in case the horse sullies Lijiang's immaculate streets along the way.

Special character

Modern-day fame overtook Lijiang following a major earthquake in 1996. To everyone's surprise, the old houses of wood and stone fared much better than the modern buildings of cement. When Lijiang was rebuilt, it was decided that all buildings in the Old Town should be in traditional style. In 1997 UNESCO added the place to the World Heritage List, which focused international attention on the Old Town, providing the impetus to retain the special character of the place. The winding little streets have been retained, along with the age-old system of water management. Mountain springs fed by melting snow on the surrounding mountain peaks supply three separate water sources – one for drinking, one for washing vegetables and the third for washing clothes and cooking pots.

Lijiang has always prided itself on its cleanliness. An elaborate system of sluices and canals help to keep the place clean. About 3 million domestic tourists visited Lijiang last year, according to the records, but the city still keeps its streets spotless. There is no motor traffic in the Old Town except for the small garbage trucks. Dozens of conscientious cleaners armed with long tongs pick up any thoughtlessly discarded cig-



By early morning the downpour had scoured and polished the granite paving stones.
Photo by Rendian



The locals are enjoying the snow so much!
Photo by Rendian

arette butts or scraps of paper. Don't expect to receive a plastic bag if you go shopping; your purchases will be handed over in a biodegradable bag that you will be happy to recycle.

Houses of the Old Town cling to the hillside and they look deceptively small from the street. Many have been turned into souvenir shops, some sell the famous Yunnan tea, or have become cafes and bars catering to famished visitors.

Traditional Tibetan-style houses in Lijiang are built around an open courtyard, with flowers and trees in the center. It's delightful to walk along a street when the courtyard doors are ajar so that you can glimpse the inner gardens. These days, very few of these houses are still family occupied as they have been turned into guesthouses. The owners have all moved into the modern town, from where they commute to the Old Town.

Travel Tips

Lijiang has a modern airport with good connections to Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chengdu and Kunming among other gateways.

It takes about 40 minutes to drive from the airport to the New Town, which has plenty of modern hotels, where you can find a comfortable room for upwards of RMB 350 per night (except in the peak seasons).

However, it is much more fun and more economical to stay in one of the Old Town's many guesthouses, where a double room with attached bathroom costs around RMB 50-100 per night.

Food in the Old Town ranges from Sichuan specialties to authentic Korean and Italian fare and it is generally excellent and inexpensive. Try some of the Naxi snacks sold on street corners at any time of the day. Don't hesitate to order a Naxi sandwich if you see it on the menu. Sakura café offers outstanding value. Start the day at an outside table alongside the gurgling stream, where you can watch the Koi feasting on waterweed, while you sip fragrant Yunnan coffee and munch whole-meal toast with local honey and granola with fresh fruit and yogurt.



The last time it snowed in Lijiang was 12 years ago.

Photo by Qishanke